

The Beat Within

Volume 9.23

A Weekly Publication of Writing and/Art from the Inside



This week, we were thinking about how difficult it is for young people (and older people, too) getting out of the Hall or jail or prison after years of being kept as dependent "slaves" for long periods of time. Too often marked by lives of deprivation and violence, drugs and alcohol, and physical and emotional abuse and abandonment, they are further stigmatized by the label: ex-con, making it even harder to lead crime-free productive lives in freedom. There are so many things wrong with our policy of incarcerating large number of people for years and years at a time, that it's hard to know where to start a list.

Our own list of "sins" would include:

Removing boys and men from the gentling effects of girls and women, forcing them to live only in the company of other males, not only preventing the development of decent social skills between the sexes, but also fostering sexual assaults and activity that wouldn't exist in the free world; preventing young women (and young men) from bonding with their infant children; isolating "offenders" in distant locations, making it difficult if not impossible to maintain family relationships that can spell the difference between success and failure; failing to provide educational and vocational instruction, setting released prisoners up for failure; and "violating" parolees and returning them to lockup so routinely and for such minor offenses that California has the highest recidivism rate in the country.

Our system continually squanders its opportunity to improve the lives of those we imprison. Some believe these demonstrated failures are deliberate. Maybe they aren't failures at all since the individual's failure guarantees the bureaucracy's success.

But to us, one of the biggest sins of the system — whether by design or accident — might be called "The Myth of Freedom." Actually, one of our good friends and colleagues, Will Roy, The Poetic Prisoner, raised this issue in a recent Beat topic meeting, and got us to thinking about it. He called his topic, "A Faulty Paradise," and we know we'll get some outstanding writing on the subject in next week's Beat Within.

Two things, in particular, led Will to describe freedom as a "faulty paradise." First, like us, he reads the many pieces we get from young people in the Halls who think that their problems will be solved once the doors open and they walk out into the sunshine. The trouble is — as anyone knows who works, pays rent, owns a car, maintains relationships among people of all ages, sexes, races, backgrounds — freedom is not easy. By idealizing freedom as "paradise," reality is bound to hit you like an ice-cold bucket of water, setting you up for failure.

Even worse is that the "skills" prisoners need to survive in the system are negatives in the "free" world. In jails and prisons, the Hall and CYA, you are totally dependent — someone feeds you, clothes you, tells you when to go to the bathroom, when to go to sleep and get up. In juvenile halls and CYA, "talk" is too often described as "dead." But in the "real" world, you must provide all these things for yourself. Stripped of virtually all opportunity for choice in the system, you are now required to make virtually all your own decisions, from what kind of toothpaste to buy to how to fill out a resumé. It requires a self-discipline entirely different from the discipline you need as a prisoner. And talk, far from being dead, is the only way you can be heard, the only way to move from point A to point B.

"Nothing will be handed to you/So you have to get up and move your feet," the Poetic Prisoner writes in "A Tortured Paradise" (in the Beat Without).

What prison, jails, CYA, the Halls do is take people out of the real world and put them into a made-up world where self-determination and expression are crushed. We can't put it better than what Will wrote in his poem: "You took me away from what I know/You stripped me of my soul./How can I be mature/If for six years I didn't grow?"

That's the heart of it — a system that treats people like bonsai trees, carefully pruned and cut back, unable to grow to their full height and potential, kept small and crippled to allow the institution to operate with minimal disruption. And then, having deprived them of social interaction and self-discovery, the system sets the prisoners "free" to try to maneuver and manipulate a world that has passed them by using skills that have systematically been stripped away. And then, to compound the problem, society watches them fail and holds them totally responsible for their failures, when — if we were honest — we would have to turn that negative judgment on ourselves and the system we support with our taxes and our silence.

This tears at our heart and soul because we can so clearly see the devastating results of this shortsighted policy. Our Poetic Prisoner, for example, has many advantages — a keen mind, a high school diploma, a supportive family and wife, a working environment that treasures him — and yet, and yet... He feels utterly unprepared for the free world. We think of the

many, many released prisoners, children and adults alike, who don't have Will's advantages — or any advantages at all — and we don't wonder at the rate of failure.

We don't know where we're going with this. It's just that sometimes we open our eyes and everything seems so clear — the problems our juvenile and adult "justice" systems pretend they're designed to cure actually create new and worse problems for everyone. It seems like a deliberate policy, like saying the United States is free to torture prisoners. No doubt it creates jobs for correctional industries, guards and the makers and sellers of a thousand different products that feed the prison complex. Maybe that's the trade-off: human lives for dollar profit. It makes us sick to our stomach to think like that, but what else can we think?

Okay, okay, we know. We ain't gonna solve this problem in our little rant-of-the-day. But still, we can't help but think that the system is more insane and destructive than any one of its occupants...

So now to this issue of The Beat, jam-packed as usual with some incredible writing from our incredible Beat family. Our topics this week deal both with life outside ("A Bad Trip") and life inside ("Built or Broken?").

We asked our writers to tell us about their worst drug or alcohol trip. "What drugs were you using when you had your bad trip? What happened that made this trip so bad? Did you mix drugs? Were you drugged without knowing it, or did you consciously take the drug? What was the worst part about this trip? And what did you learn from the bad drug trip? Or tell us about the bad drug trip you witnessed."

Our next topic, "Built or Broken," asks whether the juvenile hall experience (you could substitute jail or prison) makes you stronger or weaker. "While behind these four walls, do you feel as though you are being given the opportunity or support to build yourself up, or do you feel as though you are being broken down without even having to ask for the 'favor'? Do both happen? Or is this just a timeout where you feel like you're just wasting your time?"

"So tell us, do you usually feel better about yourself when you leave the Hall or placement/program, or do you feel worse? Do you feel like you're being helped to succeed on the outs or in your next placement, or do you feel like you're angrier and less able to stay legit? What in the Hall builds you self-esteem and what breaks it down? Give us examples of what helps and/or hurts your positive sense of yourself during incarceration."

Our third topic was "It's dangerous when..." and we got a lot of great writing on this subject from some "danger" experts...

Again, we have to tip our hats to some fantastic writers, our Pieces of the Week, in this issue, (not including San Mateo since they were closed for the week).

From the 150 Crew, Mark delivers a painful letter titled "Dear Mother;" writing on topic, David's piece, "A Life Changing Bad Trip" gets to the heart of the matter; there is real insight in Lil' Youngin's piece titled, "Lil' Youngin's Questions And Answers;" the impressive Sho-Moe is back with a double dose of POWs with his uplifting testimonial, "Built, Never Broken," and his very inspiring "My Speech at High School Graduation;" Vincent's free verse poem, "Closed and Opened" is a knock out piece, and he steps up again huge with his sincere, serious and thoughtful piece, "Stop/Thin/Listen;" we even have a POW from the Unknown Writa titled "Thug Life."

Another great (and exhausting) reality drug piece comes to us from Tanya from Marin County. It's called "Bad Trip." And also from Marin County comes the inimitable Conrad who writes about the pain of being labeled in his poem, "Broken and Shattered."

With that said, we want to remind Beat readers again about the Tenth Editor's Note Writing Contest. The question to explore is: What is your all-time favorite movie and why. (We love some of the old classics, from Charlie Chaplin to Frankenstein, but then, that's us...) Give us the low-down on what was so special about this movie or its stars, and why it has stayed with you. Remember that movies are visual, so paint as many word pictures as you can for us, and don't leave out the details. The first-place winner will receive \$100, followed by \$50 for second, and \$25 each for third and fourth place. Contest deadline: July 31, 2004.

As we bring this editor's note to a close, we look around the office and see the many young men and women who struggle every day to overcome the crippling limitations and conditioning that makes their free life that much harder, and we honor them. They are struggling mightily in a world made much more difficult by their past imprisonment, and whether they go to college, work for us, get jobs, raise families, or not — in fact, whether they fall down and return to the system for a minute or not — they are our heroes and the hope that keeps us coming back to work every day. We owe them much.

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Broken And Shattered

Broken and humble
Your prayer's just a mumble
The result of your troubles
You may be free
But you'll always be
A child of a cell
A child of hell
Whether you know it or deny it
You can't always hide it
Shadowed by this dumb shhh
You just can't numb it
The cage you've seen
The label you've been
Named as a criminal
A title inescapable
You've become a label
Criminal
Delinquent
All these names have been spent
To turn you to a monster
A leper
You're broken
You're shattered
Your mind has been splattered
You'll never be the same
All because you played and lost
Life: the game

-Conrad, Marin

From The Beat: Do you think that any child who has come to Juvenile Hall can ever shed their label of being a criminal or delinquent? How deep of an affect will Juvenile Hall have on you once you leave? Just because a person plays the game of life and loses once, do you think that he/she will always be a loser? Do you ever think of turning tragedy into triumph?

all I can
do is beg
you please,
think about
what you
are doing.
“Don’t
Drink And
Drive!”

Dear Mother

How are you doing? I miss you a lot. I really hope you handle this letter right. I don't want you to get mad at me. I just want you to know how I feel.

What I think you should do, is try to work on what I am trying to say as a son. But if you don't, that will be sorry. But I will always love you, no matter what you say or do. Anyways, I am about to get started.

I have been in the system for a long time. While I have been in the system, you have not really been in my life as a mother. The only time was when I was in that group home in Richmond. The people in that group home really liked you. They thought you were a good mother.

The lady you talked to a lot, she keeps asking about you every time I talk to her. She always asks how you are doing. She also always asks me, "How are you and your mother getting along?" I always say we're getting along well, even if it is not true in some areas. Did you know they still have pots, tables and other things to give out?

Mom, I would really like it if you could say you're going to do something and then do it! It seems to me like you are depressed about the deaths in the family. I can look into your eyes and tell that you are depressed — and I can really understand that, I really can.

I pray a whole lot that God take away all your stress! I pray that you stop smoking and start eating more. I pray that our relationship gets better as mother and son. I really do love you, Mom. I would die for you. I really would.

I really want to turn my life around. I want the best for you and Dolly, Marquis and Fat Boy; also for Ray Ray and her kids.

You always say that you would come see me and then you don't! If you don't want to see me, just say you don't. Don't say yes and then you just don't show up! That really hurts me.

Do you know how that makes me feel? I am not going to say how it makes me feel when I see other people's family come to see their son, step-son or whatever, and you don't show up. I see a mom come to see their son, and they are having a real good time. I've seen that so much that I cry.

Since I have been in the Hall, I have cried five times; believe it or not. When I call to ask you to come and see me, you will say yes. But when I call you on the day you said you would come up here, and you will say, "I can't come;" or "Call me back;" or "I will come on another day."

When I am in a group home, you don't call me or write me. I really want you to be in my life. I think you are a wonderful person when you want to be. I tell people all the time how wonderful you can be. Just think about this letter. I love you. From Mark; to my mother, G-Dogg.

-Mark, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a painful letter to read, but a lot of young people locked up will feel less alone in their pain, having read your letter, when they are disappointed on visiting days. It hurts more when you say how wonderful your mother can be, because if she was just terrible, you'd miss her less. We're sure that when she says she'll come, she means it; and that it disappoints her, too, when she doesn't make it. All you can do, is tell her how you feel and ask her to try a little harder to write, call and visit. We know she feels your love for her. Thanks for sharing this moving letter to your mother with our readers.

A Life Changing Bad Trip

A bad trip, that is exactly why I'm here. This wasn't because I was drugged; I chose to do what I did.

On Saturday May 29, 2004, my life took the turn for the worse. Just being a young teenager doing what I thought was harmless fun. I began to drink with my friends. It was a normal weekend having fun, just being me. Little did I know I would change someone's life forever.

I made the choice of getting behind the wheel of my car, now we have all heard it before, "Don't drink and drive!" Well I did, and it happened, I crashed. It happened so quick, at first I didn't know what happened and then the first thing I thought was to check the other driver. I ran to his driver side door and asked if he was okay. I didn't hear any answer. I opened the door and pulled him to safety.

I don't think I need to get into detail about what happened that night, but I am in a cell praying to the Lord that he will wake up. My life will never be the same, and to most people here this it will probably go in one ear and out the next. But all I can do is beg you please, think about what you are doing. "Don't Drink And Drive!"

Look at me; my childhood is gone because I made one bad choice. And that is that worse trip I have ever had, and I'm still having it.

-David, 150 Crew

From The Beat: David, unfortunately some mistakes we make have consequences that are irreversible. You sound like a good kid. You have a good heart. Thank you for your wise words. We will pray for you.

Lil' Youngin's Questions And Answers

Do you wanna change?

Yeah, I wanna change, not for the worse but for the best. Its time to grow up. It's time to wanna do somethin' with my life. I done with the street shhh. I been out there.

Why? What would be the difference?

The difference will be no more locked doors, no more being told when to use the bathroom no hearin' anything about room time, no more hearin' keys at night, no more slams or showering with two other dudes in the shower with me, no more hearing those gates close. No more pondering on a release date, no more crossing out x's on my calendar.

Do you think you can change?

It doesn't matter about me changing; it's about my train of thought. I could still be the same person but thinkin' ahead before I take that chance or before I process my decision in my head. It all starts with knowing your consequences. The more you know — the more you don't want to do.

And how do you know this?

Well when you have been through the same thing a number of times you start to think like, "Why is this happening," and you come to the conclusion it must be something that I'm doing. It doesn't have anything to do with you being smart or dumb.

It's just that after falling off that bridge too many times, you're gonna come to that conclusion, like either I'm not sitting down right or it's that stump. You have to know either — don't sit back on that bridge or avoid that stump.

Do you think your father not being there as a part of your life took a toll on you?

Half and half. It's like it made me a little more strong. Now I can take stuff head on. Even though he wasn't around that much because of being in prison, he helped out a lot by telling me things that I still hold to heart. And even though the stuff he went through, I'm going through — I still have a chance to say stop — it's over.

For every action it's a reaction. I've felt and seen a lot of suffering. Now he's out and still putting a helping hand out.

Do you want to be the one to change?

Yeah, it's time for me to be who I am. Even though I grew up in the 'hood doesn't mean I have to be 'hood and be dumb and act like a fool. I'm always gon' be from my spot where I get my money at, and live at and be at — that's gon' always go be me — it's no changing that.

But I can still move on, go to school and do better. I got a daughter on the way; it's time to be a man. I have to be the one, that example to show people that some good can come out of the streets that... I'll be that one.

What did you get out of the streets?

**The hospital is where
I ended up
Drinking charcoal
out of a cup**

I got a lot out of the streets. I learned a lot. I had a lot of good times and bad times. See, not only did I learn how to survive, I learned how to blend into every situation, feel me? We can talk all street, then we can flip it and hold a conversation. I know how to take care of myself. I know how to live. I know a lot more.

So, what do you think of your life?

I love my life. I don't regret one thing that happened in my life. I'd rather go through it now than later. Now I can take all the bad, flip it, and make some good out of it. Now I know how to go about everything. Now I can help others that want to come into that life. But I can't make it seem like it's over 'cause I'm still tryin' to overcome the struggle that is, my life and thoughts.

Talk to me, why do you do what you do?

Real talk, before I ever worried about goin' out to get a job, feel me, I ended up gettin' dragged in. It was my choice, but I seen how that money was comin', so I'm like man I gotta jump on that man, — that's where it's at.

So while I was out there grindin' I'll see some ninjas that didn't get down and they was workin' at KFC and Burger King — places like that make about \$8.45 an hour and they work 8 hours. So I'm like man, I'll make triple than what he makin'. I'm always havin' this thought in the back of my head like I'm out here takin' a risk while they behind that register, but it always slipped off.

Have you ever wanted to leave it alone?

Yeah, but I'm thinkin' like man if I cahoots I'm gon' still be out here strugglin'. So before I fall off, let me keep gettin' this money, I'm thinkin' like, man it isn't crime — it's survival. OG patnas told me and my patnas that we out here gettin' our money the best way they let 'hood ninjas get it — the streets. Saying stuff like — you gotta know.

-Lil' Youngin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It seems like you're struggling with what you want for the future and what you're used to doing in the past. Will your environment affect your transition into the legitimate world? How will you resist peer pressure or times when you feel desperation? It is clear that you have very keen insight into your world and your self, and that is a gift that cannot be learned. Use it wisely.

Bad Trip

Screaming and crying
My mind told me I was dying
A few stems and a couple caps
In this crazy trip, I was in a trap
Crawling on the bathroom tiles
This is where I tripped for a while
People all around me
Dark misery is all I could see
Not knowing when it was gonna end
I realized shrooms were an enemy, not a friend
The hospital is where I ended up
Drinking charcoal out of a cup
IVs running out of my veins
The shrooms made me turn insane
I ended up Oding that night
Holding on to my life was the biggest fight

-Tanya, Marin

From The Beat: Unfortunately, so many folks can relate to your poem in profound ways. Are you all better from your bad trip or do you see any permanent affects on your personality from that night? Do you still do shrooms and other drugs, or did that night teach you that you really don't want to risk destroying your life with drugs?

Built / Never Broken

Since being locked up, people have tried to break me down; but I have made sure no one can touch me. No one will ever break me down!

While being caged up, my mind has expanded beyond my old horizons, to the point where I have built myself up to something I would never have imagined. My mind has become stronger and my thought more expansive.

Even under these extreme pressures, I have found a way to build myself up! The way I've built myself, was to find out what I needed; and what I needed was knowledge. So I asked myself, "How do I obtain this knowledge?" Then, instantaneously it hit me — books! Books contain knowledge.

"Yet," I reminded myself, "I don't want a white man's knowledge!" With my naive mind, I was thinking only white people write books, and, therefore, I had nothing to learn from them.

However, when I talked to the librarian, I discovered books by my people and about my people. So I started applying myself, letting this knowledge grow and grow.

Then I began to realize things about myself were changing, for they were! I was growing inside, and I witnessed myself getting stronger in mind and spirit. It was then also that I realized I can learn knowledge from any book. So I read more and more. Traveling this path, I have grown into the person I am today.

And I am still growing — never to be broken! Not by the system or by any man! No one can take my accomplishments away. Yet to make sure no one can break you down, you've got to make the decision to never let anyone break you down, and at the same time to build yourself up, brick by brick. That's what I did, and I will not fall like a house of sticks or straw.

I will stand strong forever, because I am built in spirit — in mind and spirit! I'll never be lost in the rubble left on earth. I will live in the hearts and the minds of people who have loved me. I've built myself to be everlasting!

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for another strong and uplifting testimonial of how you've chosen to use your time instead of letting your time use you! You have ascended like a rocket, even in the short period we've followed your course. You've grown in knowledge, confidence, self-respect, spirit, heart, and mind. You're right that no one can take ever that away from you — so don't let alcohol take you to where you choose to throw it away yourself. Continue your climb, until you sprout wings to fly!

Thug Life

I fee like I am being broken down without even asking for it. When you get out of here on probation, you will feel a lot better about yourself because you'll have way more freedom. In here, you have to ask for every little thing, so when you get out, you will even respect the little things such as having clean clothes and privacy.

When you smoke marijuana, it just pumps you up for doing a big crime. When under the influence of marijuana, you can be talked into anything such as pulling a "lick" as they call it — easy money. You'll end up doing a crime where you will come up with a lot of money or merchandise, but I guess that drug led me in here.

Drugs can make you believe things that are not true. When you are in the Halls, you think about escaping a lot. The one thing that you look forward to every day is your visits. The more you get out of your room, the better you act. Some staff treats you like dirt, but what can you do? You lost all your freedom in here and have no say about anything whatsoever. You just have to deal with stuff in here like when you are hungry, sad, mad, or when you have an "EM" release and three weeks pass by and you are still in here. Being in here will open up your eyes.

-Unknown Writa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Deep writing in this piece. When you are released, do you see yourself going right back to living the thug life? How do you deal with feelings of anger and sadness when you're inside the Hall? What is the most intolerable thing about being in the Hall? Exactly what about being in the Hall made you open your eyes the most? And will you stop using marijuana when you are released? Why or why not? What would you say to someone who told you that Juvy is daycare center?

My Speech at High School Graduation

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and fellow graduates. You know that tonight is a dream-come-true, a dream that I thought I would never realize. But I proved myself wrong — and I made it!

Some of you know the current situation that my colleagues and I are in at the present time. It's funny how I came to achieve my goal. It took a dramatic situation to change my life.

Before coming to Camp Sweeney, I was on my way to fail, with no direction in my life. I had problems just like everyone else, some that affected me drastically; but these drastic events gave me the strength to strive for my education.

What gave me my strength, was also what made me the weakest — and that's my grandmother's death. When she died, I feel deep inside a hole which I was never expected to climb out of; but I did. And I didn't just climb out, I jumped out — and reached for the stars!

And I held on tight and made sure I will never lose it. And after tonight, I'll be able to say I have got one of my stars! I have used the pain and frustration to help me accomplish my grandmother's dream of my graduating — and reaching this goal, even though she's not here to see it, I know she knows I have done it.

But I do have my grandfather here, who has supported me, no matter what I have done, in every situation! Tonight he will see me accomplish my goal. No matter what wrong turn I made, he was always there to catch me when I stumbled or fell. And now he's here to help me celebrate my achievement.

Along this road, there were problems that seemed like they would never end. But the harder they got, the stronger I got; and they became easy. Now I have finished this path of high school, and so have my fellow graduates.

Now we're on another venture toward what the future brings us: for some of us, colleges, for others, jobs. But all of us will go our separate ways and find out own way of life. Let all of us graduates become the future of our world!

Now as we take a step into the future, I would like to say thank you, to my grandfather, Daniel Gutierrez, and to my teachers, Ms. C., Mr. Delgado, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Brown, Mr. Baker; and to everyone else who helped me accomplish my goals and stay on the right track. Congratulations to the graduating class of 2004!

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: And what an accomplishment it is, to raise yourself from the depths to which you had fallen and overcome all obstacles between you and the completion of your high school education! Those of us who know you and those who have been following your writings in The Beat Within, couldn't be more proud of you. You are an inspiration to us all, as are you fellow graduates. When the end of the old becomes the beginning of the new — there's nothing you can't do! Onward and upward, young Sho-Moe-ine! Congratulations to you, your grandfather, and your teachers. This is a proud moment indeed!

closed and opened

living without an excuse
to walk with my head down all the time
pacing the streets like a zombie
like so many others that get high
i do what i gots to do
to escape reality
to run away
from the pain and lose
even myself
not knowing those around me
notice the way i am allowing
myself to rot
i see a light
but am scared of it
wishing i'd known ahead of time
that if i proceeded to do
these drugs and fill my body
with demons
i would end up in the hall
i see my girl
in such pain
to have to see
the one she loves
leading this life into
an over-populated death pool
i can feel life at its worst
and it does not help
any more than less
when i can walk down the streets
and play movies about
my childhood in my mind
— soon hit a dead end
i can't go on — what do i do
here comes that light again
this time i look into it
all of a sudden hands grab me
and i realize my eyes are shut
i struggle to open them —
opening my eyes i am in a hospital bed
you are lucky to be alive young man
i am told by the nurse
i didn't understand at the time but
it was a lesson sent to me
god's message to me
a life on drugs wasn't helping
and i was only living without an excuse
[to be continued]

-Vincent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your poem in free verse tells a tale of your living life at its worst, until the day you got the message delivered by a nurse that you were lucky to be in a hospital not a hearse. You call it a message from the divine, though you couldn't even hear it at the time — now you know! You're living by God's grace. And even this sad locked down place, carries a message of grace — it's time to throw the demons out from your body, heart and mind, then fill the emptiness left behind with power of a higher kind. We see it in your writing, where you're dividing wrong and right — to take your stand on love's side.

**Stop all of the pain you cause
other people. Stop robbing
and stealing cars. Stop having
your parents worry about you
because you want to stay out
all night with your friends.**

Stop / Think / Listen

Listen up! To all my peers, I want to give this message: Stop! Think about what the world means, for a minute. Now apply it to yourself.

Stop all of the pain you cause other people. Stop robbing and stealing cars. Stop having your parents worry about you because you want to stay out all night with your friends.

Stop being disrespectful to your elders. Think about it. How would you like someone to rob or cuss out your mom, your dad or someone older in your family? Well, this is one of the things we must think about before we choose to do.

One thing is for sure — in the long run, all of the things we do wrong will come back and slap us in the face! A lot of us say, "No, that's never gonna happen to me." But take a look at the streets! If you are either locked up in Alameda County Juvenile Hall or are from Oakland, California, then you know that almost every day, certainly every week, some one dies in our town from violence.

Just the other day, I called home and was told by my sister that a friend of mine was shot and killed. I have been back in the Hall for only two weeks, and this is a person I was with the day I got arrested! Think. I might be dead, too, if it wasn't for me being in Juvenile Hall.

My friend that was killed was a likable person. Some of the things that he chose to do while alive, backfired on him! Think about the people that are in pain who will miss him. Think about what my friend could have been in life if he had stopped, thought, and done what was right!

So, all I'm saying is — when you get back to the streets, do what is right! Life is not easy for anyone. We all have to live on the same planet. And by taking from each other, we are doing the stupidest thing. We are doing what the police want us to do! Doing what the DA and the public defender want us to do. We are keeping money in their pockets.

Because of the fact that minors, myself and others like me, continue to allow ourselves to do wrong — we get locked up. When we keep getting locked up, the police know that they will always have a job because "stupid kids" will always be out in the open.

But let me stop. Some people don't understand the game. All I am saying is: Next time before you do wrong — stop and think! (To be continued.)

-Vincent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We doubt anyone takes a "public defender" job for the money. That quibble aside, we want to thank you for your sincere, serious and thoughtful piece addressed to your peers reading The Beat. It is a bone-chilling revelation, when you lose a friend to assassination in the street and you realize it could just as easily have been you! Just the thought of losing a friend that way is enough to make anyone shiver. Yet that experience, leaves many of your peers thirsting for revenge rather than putting an end to their participation in a murderous game. We've even read a piece where a youngster wanted to see his name on a T! That sort of foolishness really hurts. So we gratefully applaud your efforts to reach, preach and teach — stop, think and listen! And we look forward to your continuing this mission of compassion, truth and vision. Props on your personal decision!

Bleeding Heart

Every day my heart bleeds for my pain, deeply rooted into my heart. These roots continue to grow bigger and wider, watered by the bleeding they cause.

The biggest part of the root is the one that grew when my grandmother died. This root drains blood from my heart so fast, my heart runs dry! There is no source that can satisfy nor stop this from happening.

It subsides for days, even weeks, but it always comes back, hard, to make sure I know who causes the pain. But I know, all too well, who causes this pain. It's the one I loved most, the one I cherish and hold close to my heart. I hold onto her with all my strength, but it's like holding barbed wire and squeezing it as hard as I can — thinking it will take my mind off my pain!

But I don't hold barbed wire — I wear a necklace with her ashes. That is a burden I chose to carry. But this burden also strengthens me. Just knowing she is here with me, gives me the strength to accomplish my goals. But at the same time, it reminds me of the pain I experienced because of her loss.

This is just one root, but there are many others that torture my heart and keep growing, making my heart bleed. I am internally dying day by day, slower than a snail slimes his way around.

Do I sit with a decision to let go or to cherish my grandmother's memories? Right now I will cherish her memories and hold on until I can no longer hold the barbed wire. Then I will let go of my burden and my necklace. But for now I will deal with the pain — one day at a time.

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Perhaps the burden of pain will grow lighter as her spirit carries you into a brighter future. Her heart's spirit must burn with pride, as you and your necklace stood on stage and received your high school diploma! Watch for her to speak to you in your dreams. She will come bearing gifts in return for the gifts you now bestow upon her memory. Let the pain die and her memory live forever, one day at a time.

the closest i ever got

the closest i ever got to my true love
was the sweet smell and look and beauty of a dove
no i've never touched nor seen her true self
the closest i got was the picture on the shelf
i used to talk to her on the daily
now she won't even e-mail me
i've tried everything to get close
but she's so far almost on the east coast
i'd do anything to get to her heart
but she lost love for me and i fell apart
piece by piece i fall
and time on time i wait for a call
sometimes it seems hopeless
but i know she feels this
love i have deep inside
which swells stronger than an ocean tide
i would do anything to rewind
back to when i was in her mind
but i hope that one day i'll see and touch
the woman that i love so much
she stole my heart with no regret
for she still has it in her hands
until she gives it back i have no plans
all i can do is wait
and hope she will answer on a near date
until then the closest i ever got
was a fragrance and a picture i got

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Love does not understand distance — and the passage of time but inflames the pain of separation! Yet a continent is not so vast as a heartfelt fear that love has passed into oblivion in the heart of the one you're waiting on. Thanks for a beautiful poem, full of longing and sorrow.

**the closest i ever got
was a fragrance and a picture i got**

Tears From My Soul

People say it cleanses your soul to cry. If that's true, my soul is closed up and dirty.

I was always told as a child, men don't cry. And when my grandmother died, she said, "Don't cry, mijos! Be strong." So I hold my tears from my face to be the strength that my family needs, even if right now it is very little, I give it all.

But even though I hold these tears, my soul cries rivers for me deep inside, where no one could see, and only I feel! This is the price of the warrior's mask, an internal pain and frustration, an internal anguish.

But for my family, and especially my grandma, I will do whatever it takes to keep us together. Right now it's hard, because I, myself, am weak. Yet I strive to become strong, emotionally, mentally, physically; strong for my family.

I will try to assume a small part of my grandmother's role in the family — to be the rock and foundation that holds us together. But these pressures and responsibilities are heavy on my shoulders, though I was hand-picked to carry the yoke.

So I will do whatever it takes, no matter what sacrifices I must make, because I know that's the way my grandmother would do it. So I make the sacrifice of not being able to cry but to suffer the pain of the warrior's mask behind which my soul cries tears no one will ever see.

Only I will know, as I hold these feelings, like my grandmother did. So for now my soul cries rivers, that I wish my eyes would cry.

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are wise to see that uncried tears are a burden indeed. And the day your burden grows too great, let the tears flow down your face — but do not surrender your place on the high road of responsibility. The mental warrior knows that a tear is an intellectual thing, a jewel in the crown of a spiritual king — and no cause for shame. Perhaps your grandmother meant not that you literally hold back your tears but that you rise above your pain, refusing to surrender to the paralysis of self-pity and despair which makes life itself a burden beyond compare. All teacher-healers know, only a wounded soul understands how to help others heal and become whole.

My Bad Drug Trip On Crystal Meth,

Part I

Man, my major drug trip was crystal meth. Every other day, I would smoke. I mean, I had no place to go. I needed to stay up all night on those streets and grind all night.

When I found out my girl was pregnant, I got myself a job. I was living with her and her mom in a nice house, but I really started smoking a lot when I found out that she was pregnant. I was shocked. I got up almost every morning, going to work, and coming home and grinding late at night 'cause I knew a baby would be born.

She would tell me, "Baby, I want some ice cream," or "I want a root beer float." I ran to the store and got her some root beer and ice cream and she thought it was so cute. Her belly was so big that one side of the bed was sinking in. After she finished her ice cream, we would watch movies and the whole time her mom would watch how me and her got along.

Her mother was stressing the fact that her 15-year-old was pregnant, but at the same time, her mom loved me during all the time that I was high, grinding, working, and looking into everyone's eyes high off of crystal meth thinking that what I was doing was right. I was only sixteen.

I can't say what I was doing was right or wrong. All I wanted to do was make her happy and to have money to provide for the baby that was going to be born.

-Domo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: At ages 16 and 15, can we ask a personal question: Why didn't you use birth control to protect her from pregnancy and both of you from STDs? Now that you look back on the situation you were facing, what would you have done differently? It sounds to us that you felt desperate because you were about to be a father, and the meth you took because of your desperation only made you more desperate! When you are released, will you return to crystal meth? What was your job? What would you like to do?

All I can remember was ambulance siren and my boyfriend's voice

Thizzin'

I had a bad trip off a 'E' pill. I had taken a double-stacker red heart, and I had drunken a gallon of orange juice!

I was on my way home, and I was at the 40 bus stop when I started thizzin' so hard that my head was spinning! And I was hella hot! My head was feelin' hella light-headed, so I called my boyfriend.

He asked me where I was, and I told him that I was at the bus stop on the way to our house. I told him I was feeling hella sick, and he told me that he was coming to get me.

About two minutes later, I had dropped my phone, and I could hear him calling my name and asking what was wrong. But by the time I could respond I had hit the floor of the bus stop!

All I can remember was ambulance sirens and my boyfriend's voice. I woke up in the hospital with my boyfriend by my side. I thought I was dead!

I know from this point on, I will never pop a 'E' pill again.

-Tiny, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel like we're right there with you, getting light-headed and hitting the pavement! That's some pretty scary stuff. Thanks for reminding us, no matter how many folks say they're steady popping 'E's, you never know what can happen from popping just one of these. Glad you're back and you've learned a lesson from all that.

My Bad Drug Trip

On Crystal Meth, Part II

This is deep. This is part II to my story, "My Bad Trip On Crystal Meth, Part I."

I would see my baby girl every day. I lived with her. I would be high like every day 'cause I was stressed out. Everything was happening so fast and I was only 16 at the time. We would fight, then make love. We would get mad at each other because we felt that we didn't have enough money or I wasn't spending a lot of time with her because I had to work, grind and smoke at the same time so I could maintain.

All of this turned out to be a very, very bad trip. She ended up getting an abortion and me? I moved out, but we're still together.

-Domo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can only hope that this was a lifetime learning experience for you. How has this experience changed your relationship? What advice could you give to the next youngster, boy or girl, who finds himself or herself in this situation? In the future, what can you do so that you don't go on any other bad trips?

Holdin' Onto Hope

i feel abandoned and alone
no one to talk to and console
without a penny to my name
i'm so young and afraid
don't have the proper shoes on my feet
sometimes i can't even eat
i often cry myself to sleep
i just hope i can make it through the night
i just hold onto my faith
and i never stop praying
so i can find a way to ease the pain
i feel like giving up but
i must stay strong and hold on
never knowing if i could take it
i've struggled but overcome
got myself on my two feet
and stayed solid and strong
all i gotta do is hold on tight
to my faith in the lord
and don't let go
'cause i can make it
all i gotta do is believe
in myself and never lose hope
when i think about it
am i really holdin' onto hope
or is hope holdin' onto me

-Lil' Mama Hanna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeah, hope is holdin' onto you. Hope and faith will see you through the darkness and the pain, the fearful anxiety without a name that comes to claim you in the night. Walk through your fright and hold you head up high. If you can't sleep, just rest. Don't trip, let it go; and it will all turn out for the best after you pass this one more test. Stay up.

Bad Trip

My worst trip was being intoxicated and involved the only two things I have ever touched: liquor and marijuana. I consumed an awful lot of both of them before going to see my girlfriend at her birthday party.

Well, when I got there, it was the first time in my life that I couldn't control my high, and it showed. I only embarrassed myself and when she got mad at me, it made me think like, "This isn't my lifestyle."

I was sixteen at the time and was living in North Carolina with my grandparents. I took advantage of them and I regret it greatly now. They took me out of a Group Home in Fairfield and offered me a place to live along with a loving family. All I had to do was shape up, including getting OK grades and passing drug tests. That was it.

Well, since I didn't take them seriously, they shipped me back to California into the system, and that still didn't work. What it took was for me to become a victim of a careless lifestyle and coming to the Hall.

Well, I quit all that now and now my only fear is growing up to not be successful. I plan to change my ways when I get out. I'm going to do what I should have done when I was in North Carolina.

-Carl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes we all have to learn the hard way. What can you do to pave yourself a road to success? What can you do to make up for the way you treated your grandparents? Do you want to go back to living with them? Why or why not?

What A Bad Trip

Boy, was that a bad trip! Man, man, oh man, that was a horrible trip. This trip was a nightmare. Let me tell you a little bit about this trip of mine.

One day, I came to California for the first time in my life. Of course, I came with my family to have fun and explore California a little bit. Also, to meet some long lost friends and cousins. Well, I was having fun. We went to a lot of amusement parks and fun adventures and then my fun trip turned into a living nightmare.

The next adventure I experienced on my so-called "trip" was to Alameda County Juvenile Hall, and I've been in here ever since. Man, all I wish for is for me to just wake up from this nightmare.

-Gineto, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have some excellent writing skills. Your writing is really gripping. But you left us hanging — what was that "adventure" that ended for you in the Hall. Did it just happen, or did you have some choice in the matter? When you wake up from this nightmare, do you think that you can make your reality a better place? How can you make it so that you won't be going on any more bad trips?

Know Yourself

It's dangerous when you don't know where your life is headed.

It's dangerous when you keep making the same mistakes every time.

It's dangerous when you feel life's falling apart.

It's dangerous when life has no crisis, and you're waiting for one to happen.

It's dangerous when you don't know yourself for who you are.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is short, but it packs a whole lot of wisdom. How do you learn to know yourself? Why do you think youngsters wait for drama in their lives? When do you feel that things aren't dangerous?

Being Alone

sitting here thinking about previous times
while my body is yearning for the touch
of your body on mines

us making love one step at a time
it feels so good that it can't be wrong
listen on the radio they're playing our song
i give you my all and fifty per cent more
but still at the end i'm the one on the floor

so you walk away with all i got
and all i'm left with is an empty spot
i would cry but it never works
it doesn't heal my heart that no longer beats but jerks
you said you loved me and that we were meant to be
you said you'd love me unconditionally
for days and nights i have to be strong
wanting you here it's taking too long
so now i lay in that dark and lonely place
i close my eyes and instantly see your face

-Lil' Jap, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The immature will giggle at your poem's opening frankness, but as your story unfolds that feeling of "it can't be wrong" turns into a thankless memory — even before his face disappeared from your reality. Thanks for sharing your fine poetry.

Trip

Drink it down, swallow every drop

No control, don't know when to stop

Smoke it up, inhale every hit

No control, don't know when to quit

Cocaine, propane, acid rain

A high to gain, your insane

Smoke filled rooms, eating shrooms

Inhaling fumes

What's wrong with you?

When things get rough, you huff that stuff

Enough, enough

You've done too much

Drop it in your eye

Just to cope that high

Then you wonder why

Your mouth is really dry

So breathe in that smoke

Hope I choke

Nose is broke, from all that coke

Yeah, no joke, I'm really blown

An addict, dying all alone!

-Ray-Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ray-Ray this is a powerful piece. You never seem to let yourself down as a writer or us readers with your writing skills. The experiences you're describing include having no control, being insane, doing too much, trying to cope, dry-mouth, broken nose and dying alone. Why do you think people continue to use drugs? Addiction is one thing, but what is worse? Do you think there is such thing as rehabilitation after a life with drugs?

Nose is broke, from all that coke

Yeah, no joke, I'm really blown

An addict, dying all alone!

Love: just a Little Note (in two parts)

(One)

never thought love
could hold so much pain
had me biting my finger nails
to the grain
love will have you
losing your mind
one step at a time
this girl took my heart
she took it from the start
had me singing in the rain
i never felt the same
had me slicing my veins
just another psycho
that was put in the game
i was walking straight blind
right into love's gun sight
skipping through its valley of mines
and time after time
love will put distorted deceptions
in your mind

but hold love tight
right by your side
you'll survive love's rejections
so keep faith alive
with love inside

(Two)

love is the first thing
that comes to mind
so love will be
the subject of this rhyme
love from a friend
love from a parent
love from a person
held with some stuff
enter the life of
the pimp and the whore
enter the life of
a body behind a door
i see past a smile
and see past a face
and inch past the eye
and inch past the skin
deeper and deeper
i search within

for the truth
you can't notice
love too soon
just don't notice
love too late

i noticed love too late
'cause i thought love was fake
but now i sit up all night
do nothing but shiver and shake
now i never think love is fake
and i take my time to pray
and take this time to say
i love and need you
to love me for my sake

-Baby Face, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Cutting is an addiction, blaming anything else is pure fiction. You need to quit and stop excusing it, period; serious! That said, the rest of part one explains that crazy mixed-up feeling of singing in the rain despite love's pain! Part two stays with the topic of love and its craziness, too; while it gets more specific about the terrific power of love in you, sprung from places of darkness and fakeness — you're moved to pray in its name to be loved just as you love, the same. Amazing poetry once again, Baby Face.

Broken Thoughts

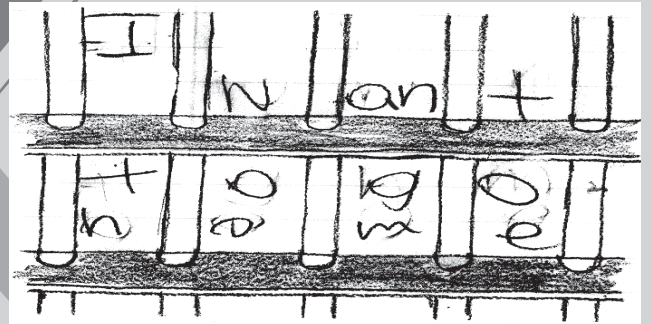
Behind these walls

In these halls

I have broken thoughts that bother me
Thoughts about my girl and my family
Being in the Hall gives you time to think about your situation
Your association with hatin' contemplators of assassination
That got you in your state of incarceration.
People in the Hall dream of better
They dream of rollin on dub's and makin' hella cheddar
Having lots of girls
And even having their name known all over the world
I know because I think of the same things
Except I only want my girl and what her love means
And the knowledge of not being with those
I care about hurt so much
It makes you think, you have bad luck
But we in the Hall have better things to look forward to
Like going home or playing hoop.
Or just spending time with those we couldn't
Thinking about things we did, that we know we shouldn't
But while we were running from the cops
We had no idea
We were going to have broken thoughts.

-Lil' Scooby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lil' Scooby, you are a really good writer; your piece makes us think. We should think before we make our choices, we need to think about the consequences of our actions. If you want your name to be known all over the world, what kind of choices are you going to make? What do you want to be known for? What are your dreams? What will be your legacy? What kind of impact do you want to leave on this world?



Alone I Cry

Alone I cry.
In this world I die.
Turn my life around, they say.
I wish everything worked that way.
You smile and laugh with your friend.
I'm done with this life style.
It must end.
Together forever —
for always and then.
Don't tell me to be happy
because inside I feel so crappy.
Look at me and judge me.
I'll sit here alone and drink my tea.
Everything you say...
someday you'll pay.
Butterflies and sunshine — life isn't that way.
It's filled with pain and hurt.
It's Shakespeare's unwritten play.

-Dani, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: That's a great last line. And you're a wonderful poet. Born earlier, you might give the bard a run for the money. You might write that unwritten play. Nice work. You're right, life does have a lot of pain, but your pain is what makes you strong. If life were all peaches and cream it wouldn't be called life!

**Butterflies and sunshine — life
isn't that way.**

It's filled with pain and hurt.

It's Shakespeare's unwritten play.

Life's No game

To all the teens who keep coming back again,
you already know the system ain't your friend,
So why do we keep smoking and drinking
These streets aren't an easy game so why do we keep playing
We need to seriously sit down and think
For once without that Remy or whatever you drink
Do you want to be locked up for your whole life?
Or would you rather have a home and a wife?
Do you like staff telling you what to do?
Go to prison, inmates gonna mess with you 'cause you new
You know the next step is nothin' nice
First you go to county then graduate to state
What you gone do if you don't like your roommate
You can't do shhh then, kill him and go to the pen,
That's the way we think and it ain't no joke
All this trouble because we was broke
If we don't change now, we will one day pay,
when you serving some time in San Quentin or maybe Pelican Bay
Why do we need to continue to live like this — we don't
put our minds to it and we too will stay afloat
We weren't put in this world to sit in a cell
or to call and ask your mom for some bail
We were put on this world in hopes we would succeed
but instead we think all we need is some weed
We need to prove to society that we ain't all that bad
We made a mistake and sometimes we get mad
That we can do something instead of being a criminal
'Cause for sure we aren't an animal
The first step to a new life is an education
get a job and go on vacation
That's kind of broad, there's steps in between
like be around positive people, not the dope fiend
They might be your homie, friend, or your brother
but if they can't do right, how can they help?
When we do wrong — we can't just yelp
There's not too many people who want to help
so we as teenagers need to help each other and stop fighting
'Cause in the end we are all fighting for the same thing
if you believe in yourself you can change
Just think about your life
when you have the choice right from wrong
'cause all wrong is going to do is keep you locked up
And for all who read this, it is up to you to change
and if you change — it can only make your life better.

-Josh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can see that you have a good head on your shoulders. We have faith that you can keep your mind right even when you are released. What are your plans for the future? You obviously know what you don't want, but what do you want?

if you change — it
can only make
your life better.

rip jorge

Sometimes at night
I sit and wonder why
That bullet came outta nowhere
And hit us by surprise
I had to sit and watch you die
It was the hardest thing I've a done in my life
When the detectives told me you died
It made me yell, scream and cry
Why did the most innocent have to die?
He never banged or started funk
Just a down ass homeboy who liked to chill
and get drunk
It's been a year since you died
We all still think about you everyday
and night
RIP, homeboy. We miss you

-Thomas, Marin

From The Beat: Very sad poem, Thomas. Were his killers apprehended? Tried? Convicted? Did the death of your friend affect how you handle yourself when you're in the streets? How can you protect yourself from a stray bullet without a name on it?

They Build You To Break You

first look in your eyes
you become somewhat of a prize
feeding on your feeble mind
to build you up inside
all is good for a while
more money more friends
more so-called love
they tell you you're somebody special
only to get inside your mental
they use you like a puppet
and work you like a pencil
then they know you off your high horse
with no remorse
throwing you right off course
with unbelievable force
they pop your new ego like a pimple
it's just that simple
once was a great smile with dimples
now a frown with tears
new fears from hidden emotions
giving it to you hard with no lotions
they build you up only to break you down
with no type of remorseful notions
no matter how hard you think you have become
never forget all cookies crumble
they build you up to break you

-Ben, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're talking about the game? All players in the game? Or does this one go out especially to the young ladies who get used by a player's manipulation of love, words, money, and all of the above? Either way it's true — either way the game builds you up to break you! So pick up the pieces and get off the street — find a job that pays, money that stays, and love that's more than a lover getting played.

**Everything I had
I lost — every
book, my Bible,
my sleeping bag,
my own clean
conscience.**

My Worst Trip

The worst trip I ever had was just recently. I think for those of us who are presented with the environment and the influence of doing drugs, those are obstacles within our lives that we all have to conquer. I think there's a certain period of time that we don't acknowledge or don't understand exactly what we do or the complete consequences of our actions. But God most definitely provides us with lessons; it's up to us to learn them. I feel that we receive the revelation, but there are those of us who choose to ignore our acknowledgement, and I'm sure you'll see the outcome of those kinds of decisions lingering all over the infected streets across America. Anyhow, that's what I experienced.

I feel there was a certain amount of drug use that I experienced where I learned lessons, lessons that taught me the difference between good and evil, right and wrong, lessons that taught me of God's graces. I feel that's because I prayed so much and I acknowledged God, his patience and blessings. I saw the signs and I understood my mission, the purpose of my wrong doings. I also acknowledged when I found closure.

But I chose to cross those invisible boundaries. As Shakespeare said, "Between God's patience and his wrath," I found out what it was like to really be on the dark side, "the underworld."

Everything I had I lost — every book, my Bible, my sleeping bag, my own clean conscience. I felt like I was broken, my roots were damaged and I was susceptible to any force to jump inside my conscience. I lost my force field and everything I felt or thought. I thought and felt, literally damaged. The only way I understood and defined the reality of myself and my reality was by analyzing those I had previously, thank God.

We reap what we sow. Time tells true tales. Keep your head and your reality to the sky. Keep your thoughts pure, don't accuse or you'll accuse yourself, don't crucify or you'll crucify yourself.

-Damaged GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Wild, passionate writing. You definitely give us a sense of how you felt on this terrible trip, despite the fact that we don't even know what happened to you. Do you feel that this experience has given you what you need to avoid repeating the same mistakes? Do you feel closer now to God and "salvation"? Will you be able to recover from this damage?

How do you envision your future?

Scared Shhhless

Scared shhhless, I heard knockings on my window every night
I thought it was other dope fiends trying to get in and start a fight
I saw moving shadows and heard footsteps down the hall
It never occurred to me I was imagining it all
I heard them scream my name; they wanted me dead
For weeks I thought this, but it was all in my head
I thought they'd rape my mother and steal all our jewels
So I took off to the city, went on the run like a fool
My mom asked everyone "Where's Audrey? Have you seen her?"
Nobody knew I ran, because I owed some dude a teener
One thing led to another
I smoked an 8 ball every day
Almost everyday to our God I would pray
To get me out of this mess
And He finally did
But now I'm locked in Juvy
It sucks; I'm only a kid

-Audrey, Marin

From The Beat: How did you finally realize that you were tripping from the drugs, Audrey, and that your fantasies weren't real? Are you cool with your mom now? Can you function without drugs now? What was the basic reason you were attracted to drugs in the first place? What do you do now instead of drugs? Admitting the problem is the first step.

My Best Friend's Bad Trip

Me personally, I have never had a bad trip. But my best friend was drinking and drinking when we were at a family party. He drank so much that he ended up falling on his face.

When he dropped, I picked him up and called the ambulance. When they got to the party, he was still unconscious. He didn't wake up until he was in the hospital. The doctors gave him charcoal, crushed charcoal mixed with water, a little bit of water. He had to drink it so that he could throw up some of the alcohol from his system.

I was seriously scared for him. I thought that something bad had happened to him. Ever since then, he never drinks alcohol. I don't think it's good that it happened to him, but it did help him realize that alcohol is not good for everybody. In the end, that bad trip was a good experience to help him change.

-Raul, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've written a perfect little "bad trip" story! Your friend was lucky to have you there to call the ambulance. But since then, he's been making his own luck. Alcohol abuse is really messed up: It can kill on the spot, or it can kill slowly, day by day, year by year; and you're only sober when you're in here!

**that bad trip was
a good experience
to help him
change.**

Between Brothers

On May 12th, 2002, my life changed.

The day was going on as a regular day. At 9:15, my brother came in the house. He was so messed up he could not even walk straight. I was in my room watching TV when he and my mom began to argue.

My brother was trying to leave back outside the house, but my mom said she wanted him to stay home. She said she had a feeling something bad was going to happen. He did not want to listen. He kept trying to get out the house, but my mom would not move from in front of the door, and he knew better than to put his hands on her.

So, reluctantly he walked back to our room that we shared (at that time). He laid down, acted like he was going to stay home. Once my mom went to go lay down, he got back up and put back on his shoes and coat. I asked him where he was going. He told me to shut up and walked out the room.

I got to him before he walked out the door. I called his name. He turned around, and when he did, I punched him in his face. He hit me back, and I fell against the stairs. We started wrestling. When I pushed him off me, I reached for my cannon.

He backed up and asked was I going to shoot him. I said, "Yeah, if you don't get back upstairs like Mama said." He said, "Yeah, right."

He walked out the door, and I shot a hole through the door. He stopped in his tracks and asked me again was I gonna shoot him. I said yeah again. This time he walked back up the stairs. The whole night I stayed up to make sure he did not leave.

The next morning we found out the people he was supposed to be with, their car got shot up. He thanked me for not letting him leave, and now our relationship got stronger. Now it's rare to catch one without the other.

-Staga Lee B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very scary piece to read because we don't know how it will come out. We know many stories between brothers that don't turn out so nicely as yours. Do you think you could have handled the situation without your cannon? What would you have done if your brother just had such a hard head that he chose to keep going that night? Would you have shot him? How would you have dealt with that reality? We're glad that the two of you are tight again, but we sure wish you would retire your weapons for good (because we don't see any good coming if you don't...).

incarcerated

Stuck in the dark and seein' nothin' but black
I feel like my life is plain, with a big-ass crack

Right now I'm coo'

But I feel like switchin' gears

I feel like going crazy,
got smoke comin' out my ears

Locked in and locked out

Feels like they playin' me in the drought

I got a little bit of hope that makes me feel stimulated

I want to see my folks

but I can't because I'm incarcerated

-Young L B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We like the interesting images in this flow. What's the "big-ass crack" in your life? How are you going to switch gears? What will it take?

Built, Not Broken

I think being in here is making me stronger, although I would rather be doing something else.

I have strong parents who support and are behind me. Unfortunately, I know they're hurting because of this situation. I read books to keep me from wasting time. I really don't see a need to be angry at anyone but myself because I put myself here and now I'm dealing with it.

You can't let this timeout from home depress you or leave you weak because the system wants to see you like that. I know it ain't easy doing time, but if you're doing something constructive and empowering yourself to do right, you will.

Me, I read books on how political leaders have handled time in facilities they were in, and I think I'm blessed to be here. When I do get out I will not look back.

-Diddy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We really admire you, Diddy, for dealing with the reality of your situation in the most positive way you can, which is by reading to better yourself while you're here. What books have you read that you would recommend to others? We know what you mean by not looking back when you get out, but we hope you look back enough to remind you of what it means to give your life over to strangers so you can avoid that at all costs.

the Life that made me who i AM

See, my mind is motivated

while my behind's incarcerated in jail.

I try, but here you're hated.

But I stay strong instead of faded

'cause if you let the system have you broken
you'll think you're jaded.

Then those doors won't ever open.

So when you land here stop your joking

unless you want your temple swollen.

Keep all your comments to yourself.

Don't speak unless you're spoken to.

Let you heart and your mind collide.

Find who you are deep, deep inside.

Ask yourself before you ride:

Can you really handle it outside?

So if you can't just ride the tide

'cause no one cares about your side.

-G-Man B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What is your mind motivated to do? Where do you see yourself in five years? More important, what steps will you take to get there? When you look deep, deep inside, what do you see?

**Let you heart
and your
mind collide.**

This Ain't Helping

Being down, I don't think it's helping me one bit. On the real, I think I'm getting worse than what I was.

Up here I'm getting into hella shhh all the time. When I first got locked up in here, I did not even get into as much stuff as I get in right now. It be petty things, too, but that neither here nor there.

It ain't helping me by being locked up. It's just making me madder sittin' up in here, not even knowing what's happenin' with this time.

Locking people up ain't the answer.

-Leek B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree with you that locking people up is no answer (unless people have to be restrained because they're out of control). But then, what is the answer? Looking at yourself and your crime, what do you think would have been a reasonable response from the system — and one that would have a beneficial effect on you to change your life? What specific plan would you come up with for yourself?

That's What's Dangerous

It's dangerous when you have a person who don't care about themselves or others. When you have a person who don't care about themselves, how would you expect them to care about others?

First a person has to care for themselves before he can care for others. When a person don't care, he can just go all out at any time and any place. That's why you got people that would just start busting into the crowd when they get mad, because they just don't care. If they get away, coo', but if not, hey, it's nothing. That's when they ain't missing nothing out on the streets, so going down is just a thing that happened.

I thought that I did not care when I was out, but now seeing all that is affected by me being down, it changed my mind and how I feel about life.

So yeah, that's dangerous when you have someone who don't care about the life of anyone around. That's dangerous.

-Leek B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We definitely agree that a person who doesn't care about him (or her) self, is a true danger to everyone (including him or herself). How can young people be made to care for themselves? What can we do to make youngsters understand how important they are — not just to their own future, but to ours as well? And what made you start to care about your life and the lives of those around you? Did it require you to be locked up before you realized it?

Where Were They?

Where is the police when we need them?

Where was they at when Tipp got shot eleven times?

Where was they at when Terry T got shot?

Where was they at when my lil' cousin got killed?

Where was they at when he put that mach in my face?

Where was they at when my pops got killed?

It seem like they always there when we don't need them, but when we do, they never show up.

To tell the truth, they only come to lock us up.

-Lil' Dakota B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've asked some very good questions here, Lil' Dakota. If you knew who killed your cousin or your homies, would you tell the police who did it? Can you think of any way your community could ever think of the police as helping you, as providing you a service? At the same time, can you think of any way the police will ever see you and your community as worthy human beings who deserve positive services?

that bad trip

I had a bad trip one time. It all started at a homeboy's crib.

Me and my best friend were drinking the biggest bottle of Remy. We killed the whole thing in an hour by using shot glasses. Afterwards we smoked two blunts to even boost the feeling. Man, that was where I screwed up.

That was the day I got my new cell phone too, so after we finished the two blunts, a homie called me and wanted to go out and holla at some chicks. So he caught the bus over and got me.

We left, and on our way we went, I left my homeboys at the house 'cause they messed around and passed out. So me and my boy get on the bus, and I started trippin'. My phone kept ringing off the hook, and before knew it, I started hurling all on the bus.

I tried to make it to the window, but it was too late, so whoever was in my way got it. Man, my head was spinnin' like that girl on "The Exorcist." Yet my phone kept ringing, and that was making my headache worse. So my dumb ass threw the phone out the window.

When we got off the bus, I'm telling him I'm cool and to not say nothin' to me. Still, I was yacking. When I looked up, he was gone and the police was helping me up into the car. Man, was I trippin'.

They took me to my house, and when I woke up the next morning, I thought I had a nightmare. I was looking all over for my phone, went downstairs to the gateway. My shirt wit' throw up all over it was outside, and when I went through my pockets, all I found was my charger and my phone receipt.

That's my bad trip, never will I drink again. Now that's a learning experience.

-Status The Entertainer B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This experience would be enough to put us off drink forever. What about you? Have you been drunk since this happened? Do you have any desire to drink again? Do you know people whose lives have been destroyed by alcohol? Why do you think so many young people drink to excess?

I tried to make it to the window, but it was too late, so whoever was in my way got it.

now i'm building

When I first came to the system I felt like I was being broken, but I came to realize that I'm building myself, because I'm going to Glen Mills, and that is an opportunity to get my diploma and get my life together. I feel this YGC time ain't nothing but some time to get yo' head together.

-Bear Weezy B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Excellent attitude, Bear. We hope you'll keep this mindset when you're at Glen Mills and once you return to your old neighborhood with its temptations and patterns.

it's dangerous when...

It's dangerous when people run their mouth a lot. For example, you have people in this institution that like to run their mouths and talk a lot. They only seem to do this off their screens or when the counselor is around to draw attention to themselves.

Old folks have a saying that says, "Loose lips sink ships." This means that running your mouth doesn't affect nobody but you. I've got the Afro theory though. Individuals have this type of behavior because they're scary, immature, and clueless.

My reason for this is that the scariness comes from always having a weapon on the outs, and when they get in here they still have that, "I'm going to kill you when I get out" mentality. But what they fail to realize is that they don't or aren't accessible to any weapons, and in here you must use your fists, which is where the scariness comes from, because they realize this. So they only talk when they are protected and feel secure.

This is why they are clueless, which brings me to my final point: Immaturity. People call themselves men, but if you were a real man then you would be able to tell another individual face to face how you feel, and what's on your mind. Words of wisdom, which is, like I said earlier, which is: "Loose lips sink ships." And "Speak your mind, express your feelings and become a man," and get off that little kid shhh.

Men take care of their responsibilities, and they know how to speak up. Know what I'm talking about? One

-Afro B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yeah, we know what you're talking about, and we think you make some excellent points (as always). Just for the record, though, the term "Loose Lips Sink Ships" comes from World War II where the Allies (America, Great Britain, Russia) warned their soldiers to keep all troop movements, orders, things they'd seen or heard, to themselves for fear the enemy would hear about it.

The Bigger Picture

What's up, Beat? I'm still in here. But I got bad news. Today I went to court, and they said they're gonna let me out and let me go back to my mother — but I'm on probation!

And this is not just any probation. I'm going to New Jersey to live with my mom. I'm on probation out there and back here, too. And if I get in trouble out there, they can send me back here!

As I'm in the courtroom, thoughts are racing through my mind, like: "Why they put me on probation in two places and I'm only gonna be in one of those places?"

But then, on the other hand, I started thinking about the bigger picture — my freedom! And I started thinking about how much I got to lose! So I took what they gave me and walked out the courtroom feeling both happy and lucky.

-Shawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good for you! So many of us respond to surprises badly, and then get stuck. You could have made what is really a wonderful opportunity into a disaster — by acting out in court or heading back east with the attitude of a troublemaker. Now just follow through with the maturity and good judgment you showed in court.

MY walk with you Lord

when i pray i'm confused
i don't know if i truly connect with you
because i go to sleep with guilt on my heart
but when i lay my head down and go to sleep
i'm still confused with the words
that i've spoken to you lord
because my heart gets hard
and i still refuse to listen to your word
and yet you still try to work with me
and i still refuse to follow through with your word
so you don't give me signs for awhile
and i try to listen to you and then i
keep repeating myself over and over again
but put myself back up in the place where
i don't want to be — but i still do it again

-Jeremy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: St. Paul, too, complains of doing what he doesn't want to do but still continues to, turning his back on the Lord to follow the ways of the world. Turn your heart to the pleasures of spiritual treasures; do the next right thing and hear your heart sing! Change the way you're living, and you'll know you're forgiven. And you'll learn to stay free, just as you want to be. (One spiritual exercise: pray for your enemy.)

After I Got Drank

I had a bad trip after I got drunk. I got into a fight at school with another kid. And I was on probation for grand theft!

I had two weeks of school left and I was going to get off probation; but I did the wrong thing and got into a fight — because that day the drunkenness took over my mind.

I fought, then woke up in a police car — and I had forgotten what happened! The policeman told me that I had tried to kill the other minor by beating the hell out of him. So, since I didn't remember a thing, I couldn't get my story right — and I ended up in the Hall.

Well, that was the worst drug problem I've had as of yet. But at least now I know that when you drink, it can do bad things to you!

-Lil' B, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Drinking yourself to oblivion is a bad idea even if you're home in bed, but at school! You know that you're capable of doing a lot of stupid and/or destructive things — so why give your brain over to any drug that takes away your judgment? If you want to stay free, you'll need all your faculties fully functioning. Live, learn, and put your learning into practice.

**I took what they
gave me and walked
out the courtroom
feeling both
happy and lucky**

Hard times

What is it? This is Young Sam, and I ain't wrote for a minute. I got stuck for a minute, and I never really could get a chance to write — but I'm back!

Lately life's been bad, but I can't blame nobody but myself for putting myself in this position with my wrong decisions — so I'm suffering the consequences for my actions! And even though I don't want to, I have to pay my debt to society. But I know that by doing this, I will become a better person.

In here I can think about what I really want to do with my life. What things do I want to change, and what do I want to keep the same? I can think through the good and the bad, and I can figure out what makes me happy and what makes me sad.

The truth is, before now, I never really knew myself. I only knew what the streets and my potnas wanted me to be; mainly because that's what raised me. My dad was always in the pen' or just not there. And my mom always was away at work. So it was just me and my little brother and the ninjas on the block.

If you could only feel my pain, you'd understand. I wanted to go insane, given the fact that whenever I asked my mom, she would have to lie — because she didn't want me to know about my dad being in and out of jail plus other problems that were going on.

But I still love my dad for the fact that when he was around, he did what he could to help. And I love my mother also, for being a single mother. Most of the time, she raised us pretty good; and she was always there when I needed her.

So in ending this entry, I just want to say — don't let hard times get you down. Stay strong and keep your head up. I love you Mom.

-Young Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Welcome back to our pages, Sam. It's harder to stay focused on the positive changes you want to make when you're at Camp in the mix, plus home weekends, than it is sitting alone in your locked room in the Hall. We surely grew to respect your honesty and your insight as we followed your writings from the Hall to Camp — and you made some important breakthroughs in your thinking. Now's the time to reclaim that positive path; and this time, don't let your feet stray. Big changes may seem harder to make, but really it's harder not to slip when you compromise every step you take, trying to keep a stake in your old ways.

When Gangs Collide

it's dangerous when gangs collide
it's dangerous when gangsters cry
it's dangerous when you come through
and no one on the block knows you
it's dangerous to give and receive scars
it's dangerous when you stuck behind bars
it's dangerous when a gangster's on a mission
'cause money to a gangster is like addiction
it's dangerous to be a gangster ya heard
it's dangerous 'cause somebody gonna get hurt
it's dangerous to live a gangster life
it's dangerous and that's no lie

-Lil' Bil, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Tell us why, young gangsters want to glorify a life of danger and pain. 'Cause gangster dreams of wealth and fame always end the same. Wake up! Get out that game.

Love: Just a Little Note Again

love and hate can
lead to heartbreak and pain
if you hate for so long
it brings damage to the brain
and you'll eventually turn insane
from the hurting of the game
it will break your heart
it's nothing but sorrow
and tears
reminiscing
on your fears
so you start to get high and drink beer
thinking its going to take off your fears
when you get in that zone
you're ready to run and hide
'cause the feeling inside
tells you to be alone
but you can't do it alone
you need someone
to comfort your screams and moans
but after the pain
you'll be ready to bloom
so don't hide in your tomb
but if you keep hating
you will meet your doom
'cause haters die soon like boom

-Baby Face, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope the "you" in this poem is the face in the mirror, 'cause you need to quit the game and get nearer to your heart's demands. You're seeing that a life without love can never take the measure of hate's pressure — love's the only way.

I'm Lost, Can You Help Me?

I'm sick and tired of this life I'm living, and sometimes I can't tell the difference between wanting my old ways to die or just wanting to die.

I don't want the pain of dying, but I don't want the pain of taking my next breath. Do I really feel like this? Or is it my mind just playing with me as I write this mess? Locked alone in this room in Boys' Control, I don't seem to know how I really feel or what I really think. I lay in bed with my eyes closed and I ask myself — am I really asleep? Or am I just day-dreaming about life and what I would be doing if I were free?

I walk around this place, and I hear people sayin' my name. Do they really know me? Or did they just find out my name from one of these ninjas in the Hall? How can you say that you're my friend when you don't even know me? That's why I don't mess with fake people, 'cause they be slowly killing me.

So, until I find out how I really feel about myself and the life I've been living — I'll just stay to myself. That's the only way I can stay real with myself.

-T-Maine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you walk through your fear and emotional pain, you can be born again to yourself. It is straight wisdom to avoid those who want to keep you behind that mask of a reputation you wore in the street. It's time for you to wake up and start to be the man you were always meant to be — not the one you learned to play in the street — but the one you need to be so you can feel free on the inside and stay free on the out!

Lil' Dada And Abbas' Page

Living is dangerous

It's dangerous when you out on the streets
up all night and you can't get a good night's sleep.

It's dangerous when
you getting caught for them guns
and you out all night out there on the run.

It's dangerous when you got to watch yo' back
'cause you always
got somebody out there talking smack.

It's dangerous when you go to the corner store
and got to watch yo' back if you ain't got yo' gun.

It's dangerous.
I'm telling you it's dangerous out there.
Try getting shot three times
and see if you make it out there.

It's dangerous out there
but I can't tell you about yo' luck,
what these streets have,
you about to find out, Young Buck.

It's dangerous out there in them Oakland streets
especially when you living out there,
you readers of The Beat.

-Lil' Dada, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Is there anything you can do to reduce the dangers you face out there? You say you have to watch your back if you "ain't got yo' gun," but does that mean you don't have to watch your back when you're packing? Seems like guns are why you have to watch your back in the first place. Do you see yourself in the future living in freedom with a job and home and a family, or do you see yourself living the life the system has designed for you?

Vicarious Bad Trips

I really never had a bad trip. But a couple of times when I was with friends, I experienced some of my friends trippin' out.

One time I was with my friends at lunch time, and we were smokin' weed. Like halfway through the blunt, my friend turned pale and fell forward on my other friend that was standing in front of him. My friend thought he was playing around, so he moved and my friend then fell on the bush. Then he laid on his back on the concrete looking blue and pale.

I was panicking, but like 30 seconds later my friend got back up and was finally O.K. At the end, my other friend started smoking again, but I was too scared to do it.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You say you were too scared to start smoking after watching your friend almost die, but we think that shows you were too smart to start again. Have you given it up altogether? Why do you think an experience like this didn't have the same effect on your friend as it did on you?

The Devil Keep On Messing With Me

Excuse my language, but I just wanna know
why the devil keep messin' with me
I ain't asking to go from day to day
from night to night

I ain't got no sleep like it was "rock the mic,"
it be like I be hella high or as if I don't got no life
I know I did some wrong, but what about right
that don't give me a reason to not sleep at night
is it because I'm the one that always keep it on the real

I try to run from it even hide from it
but he still be coming back

every night and day I always pray
but I still get up on one of them hypes
I'm kind of happy that he mess with me
while I'm young

'cause if he still be doing it when I get older
I may still be looking over my shoulder
'cause now I know you wouldn't wanna do that
and lose yo' bothers

knowing they ain't coming back
because I always be thinkin' was the devil on them
like he's on me

I would wanna know but they didn't get no time to tell me
though

but you know the cold thing is that they all got killed the
same way when I got shot, shot them three times
you would have thought that I was going to die too
but I'm about to be out

but I still wanna know why the devil keep messin' wit' me

-Lil' Dada, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This too is such a sad piece, as you question the way your life is heading, and as you think of your lost brothers, RIR. Why do you suppose the devil is so focused on messing with you? Could it be the other way around — could it be that you are messin' with the devil? We've known you for a number of years now, and we believe if you put your mind to it, you can shake the devil loose. But that effort requires you to make choices, and not blame others for the choices you make. Keep writing and questioning your life that's where it starts!

being incarcerated

While being incarcerated, I feel like I'm being given the opportunity to build myself. Also, I feel like I'm being broken down.

Being incarcerated has made me realize all my mistakes I've made throughout my life, and it also gave me a better view of life and who really cares about me.

I also learned a lot more about my religion, and I'm positive my life is going to go to the right way when I get out. I feel being broken down sometimes when people talk and run their mouth about things that have to do with my life. I also feel broken down, when I don't have any idea what going to happen to me.

I believe I'm being helped to succeed on the outs, but I'm learning everything by myself, and Allah's helping me on the way. The Hall helps build my self-esteem when I stand up for myself and others when I see wrong being done.

Being incarcerated can help someone or it could kill someone. It's up to the person which way he or she wants to go.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We applaud the positive attitude you bring to your piece, and to your experience in the Hall. It's particularly encouraging to see how much strength you are gaining from Islam. We hope you're able to use that strength when the difficulties of life that everyone faces come up. Where will your next steps take you after the Hall?

Bein' In Here

I feel like the system is bringing me up because it's things I learned in here that I didn't pick up on the outs, like controlling my anger. I went to school on the outs, but I'd leave. I didn't have the patience to sit on a class.

Bein' in here showed me how to be mature, 'cause I'm dealing with more men. The counselors, they talk to me like an adult. They're not just there physically, but mentally. I didn't have a father figure.

When I was three, my dad was around. He found another woman and had kids with her. He left me because my brother wouldn't let him. I'm glad 'cause otherwise I'd be in a foster home 'cause my dad's in the pen in New York.

My brother was normal. He picked on me like every brother does. It made me tough, but that got me in trouble. I'd like to be different to my little twin brothers. If I were near 'em, I'd want to have fun with them, not fightin'. Show them you ain't got nothin' to show anyone but yourself.

-Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's hard to grow up without different role models to follow. What have you learned about dealing with men while being in the Hall? What's your brother doing now? Does he still pick on you, or have you two made your peace together? How old are the twins? What are their names? How long as it been since you saw them? What are you going to do when you get out to make sure you don't have to be separated again? If you have kids, will you stick around to raise them?

My Worst Drug Trip

My worst drug trip ended in a car crash. It all started when me and my friends cut school.

There were three of us: my friend, his girlfriend — and me rollin' up my weed in the back seat. We were driving in her brand new Malibu, and we wound up driving on this one-lane road where the other side of the road is a cliff and a creek.

So she was driving her car, and we were all smoking our blunts, getting high and such. And I wasn't wearing my seatbelt. Then, I guess she got too high and was going too fast on this scariest road — and she drove us off the cliff!

We hit a tree first and then a big ol' rock! And it was a thirty-eight foot drop! I was flyin' in the back seat, seein' air bags open and windshields shatter!

Then I blacked out when I hit my head. The driver was out, too. We were both knocked out! But my homie in the passenger seat pulled us out and woke us up. And the driver behind us saw it all and called 911. An ambulance soon arrived.

What I learned from this: If you're gonna smoke hella weed in a car with people, make sure the driver can handle it. And watch female drivers.

-Andrew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That has got to be the stupidest conclusion we've ever read after such a well-told story! If that's all you got, you must be learning disabled. You are alive by the grace of God, and you plan again to go smoke and drive? You think you're all that? You can't say, "If you're gonna smoke, stay parked." Or even, "Take it slow." — Man, you need a check-up from the neck up!

**If you're gonna
smoke hella weed in
a car with people,
make sure the driver
can handle it.**

Nightmares About My Son

I know for me it is hard to talk and write, because of the hard time I am going through. The past two months I have been having nightmares about my son. The nightmares are about whether or not I'm ever going to see him ever again, because of his mom.

-Slope, Marin

From The Beat: Does your coming to Juvy affect your relationship with your son's mother? Some people are freaked by the idea of youth going to Juvy, as if it were a judgment of their character. Will your baby's mama let you talk to her, so you can explain your side of things? Also, do you think if you stay out of Juvy, go back to school, get a summer job, etc — she will think you can be a stable and reliable father?

Why I Don't Smoke Crystal

This is Terrell, and I like to say I like weed and alcohol; but when I'm in the mode, I might mess with coke.

One time I had stolen an eighth of crystal; and me and some OG from Hayward smoked it. The one thing I liked about it, was the cloud when you blow the smoke out. That was the only reason I kept on hitting it, was 'cause of the smoke cloud.

But after that, I went to a party — and I was on one! I was drinking hella beer! And me and a homeboy drank a fifth to the face. But I could not get drunk!

So I went home, and my mom's friends had some beer, and I was still trying to get drunk so that I could pass out. But it was not working, and I could not go to sleep for nothing!

So I was up till the next morning when some homeboys came to pick me up at like nine a.m. And they had two thirty-packs of Budweiser. So we got keyed. I was on my way back home when we got in a car accident — and I hit my head on the windshield!

Then I finally got home and fell asleep, but only for like two or three hours before I woke up to throw up. And I still wanted more sleep but could not sleep! So that's why I don't smoke crystal.

-Abo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You learned something from your experience, about smoking crystal anyway: those clouds of smoke are no joke! So now you're waiting for cirrhosis of the liver before you quit drinking, right? Or till you end up in a hospital bed next time you hit your head on a car windshield after smoking and drinking too much? Plus you do know that coke will take you everywhere crystal goes and have you paying through the nose!

but remember it's dangerous

it's dangerous when you cross game
that's how you catch a bullet in the brain
unlocked secret places of deceit
trial by fury
it's dangerous when you trust someone
because lust is the mean one
it's dangerous when you rush one of us
because in thugs we trust
thug life is what we say
because of all the hate you gave
outlaws by night
innocent by day
it's dangerous when i start to love
only to be crushed
when it comes to push or shove
it's dangerous when you live in the past
it's dangerous when i'm high off glass
it's dangerous to live in darkness
it's dangerous to run from your secrets
all in all my life is dangerous
so to those who care —
just be there
but remember it's dangerous

-Ben, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Danger cannot be completely escaped or erased, but that doesn't mean there are not changes you can make to reduce the danger you daily face. Move out of darkness into light! It might feel scarier to start living right, but love will no longer be but a vacation from pain — love will be the foundation of a life that's safer and more sane. The choices you make as a thug are the greatest dangers to your life, limb, happiness and love.

My Best Friend's Bad Trip

A bad trip, I had a bad trip. I witnessed my best friend doing drugs. He and me go way back.

He is so good in basketball he had a scholarship to Cal and was starting — and can jump out the building! He was way on his way to a good fortune, when one day changed his whole life!

He was introduced to weed and crack and ecstasy pills. He started doing it on an everyday basis — and he couldn't stop! He got caught up and wasted his life. And that's my bad trip.

-Shawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If he can stop now, he may have wasted a chance at easy glory, but he can take his skills and carry his story back into the gym, especially if he goes to college and gets a teaching credential in PE. 'Cause he's already earned his degree in the school of hard knocks!

bad trip down wit' drank

This is what happened when I went to a party one night wit' some friends. And the party was dead, so I went to the store and got some alcohol (drank) to myself — and drank it all.

I went back to the party, and it was still dead. So I seen some of my family members and went to a bigger party. So we went, and when we got there, we seen one of my friends — and drank some more drank.

And I was even higher than I ever was before, because some of my people seen me acting stupid — and they made me sit down! And I did, and then we went home.

It was about two in morning, and my mom came to the door — and wouldn't let me in! And I got my nephew in trouble. So I got kicked out of my house and stayed out for a week. And I felt really bad, but at least I didn't get my nephew kicked out, too.

And now I've learned my lesson. Because gin or any type of alcohol can kill you and hurt loved ones and people and family members.

-Tiger, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes, alcohol poisoning can kill, but the pain you cause loved ones is a more clear and present danger! Plus the chaos and destruction you introduce into your own life, like your being banned from your own home for a week. Some can drink moderately. Some can't drink at all, because what they really want is to get drunk — falling down, stupid, self-destructive, blind, black-out drunk. Which group do you fall into?

many nights

It's hard to know what's going on
When shhh keeps going wrong
Wakin' up, curled in a ball
Finding out I'm in Juvenile Hall
Spinnin' in the mornin', throwin' up
What happened last night, when I was drinking up?
What happened to the ladies dancin' around
When me and my friends were loungin' around?
Guys tokin', ladies chokin'
When people just found out the cops are rollin'
We got rowdy, all liquored up, ready to fight
Grippin' our fists, hella pissed
Next thing you know, you're being apprehended

-John, Marin

From The Beat: Don't you mean, "Next thing I know, I'm being apprehended"? Does this party scenario happen often? What else do you do besides party so hard you get drunk or stoned? What else do you do for fun? How do you intend to expand your life beyond partying? What do you want for your life?

the walls save me for a few days

When I am locked down behind these walls, I feel like it saves me for a few days and gets me out of danger, but then, it is just a time out. I usually feel better when I am out of the Hall, but sometimes being in placement helps, because I can take the services I am being offered and get something out of it.

When I used to come to the Hall, I didn't care about being here, because I had nothing that I cared about and didn't think or feel like anyone cared about me. Now I have things to care about and it seems like forever sitting in here.

-Candy, Marin

From The Beat: At least you're trying to overcome your feelings of self-defeat. What services does placement offer that help you? How do you utilize the help you are given at your placements? Where will you go when you get out? Is your family there for you? Do you have friends you can stay with? Will you go back to school? We hope so. What do you care about now? What do you do for fun?

About My Life

I'm happy at home, but ever since I was little, the police had to come to my house and take me to mental health, hospitals and now this, Juvenile Hall, because I always say I'm going to do good, but I don't. I can't control what I say, 'cause I threaten people, I cuss. It gets me in more trouble with the law. Talking to my PO, Jeff, he said that if I go home today or tomorrow, I'll have to write an essay about why I'm in here. It's not guaranteed I can go home. If I don't, then I'll leave when I leave, I guess.

I don't like my placement. I like my family's home. That's why I want to be closer to my county — Napa. I live in a residential home and I can never get my temper under control. My mom says being in placement is temporary. I'm not positive when I'm going to come out, but I hope it's soon.

-David, Marin

From The Beat: You sound like you're really angry and confused about a lot of stuff, and would like some real help. Can you talk to your mom or dad? Do you have any other adult you can go to for advice and help? What makes you so angry? It seems like you already know that you can't threaten people when you're angry, but that you don't know what to do when you get mad. There's nothing wrong with being angry. It's natural. You just can't take it out on other people. What would help you when you get angry, that wouldn't hurt anyone else? Good luck on the outs.

broken between these walls

How can I keep my head up?

When my real life doesn't follow me through these walls

And they lock me in

And lock the people I love out

How can I stay away from loneliness?

How can I maintain a smile?

When my happiness is on the other side of locked doors

In a place where they say is to help

But in reality only brings you down

Putting you in a negative situation

With people who have negative ways

Leaving you so little room to change

The only time I feel good is when I pray

So knowing all this, I know I've got to stay away

-Lindsey, Marin

From The Beat: One point of Juvy is to get you out of your environment for a while, so you can chill and examine your life. One part of growing up is learning to trust yourself and think for yourself, regardless of your parents, friends, other youth in Juvy, etc. Ultimately, you, like everyone, is responsible for his/her own happiness. Can Juvy at least teach you that?

God Help Me

God help me

I don't know where my heart lies

I can see my soul

I am lingering on

Will all the world's mysteries unfold

The mist in my mind

Life still goes on

While I linger on

I wish I could see you sing your sorrowful song

While I linger on

Through this world of pitiful songs

-Jason, Marin

From The Beat: What do you think would give you the hope you seem to want and need? How can your soul become complete? Who are you talking about in this poem?

A fool's confession

it's dangerous when

i feel unsafe

and i have to relate

to packing my thang

'cause everybody gangbang

it's dangerous when

i gotta do what i do

or when i act a foo'

it's dangerous when

a foo' ride through

turf of a rival crew

but you won't see

till it comes to be

it's dangerous when

some foo' disrespectfully

speaks of what he sees

for danger surrounds you and me

so be careful what you do

unless you're a foo'

are you

-Jose, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You say you can act a foo' and that's not even coo' for all the reasons you relate. Maybe you think it makes you look fearless. If so, you need to hear this — continue to hang for a prison gang and prison's where you'll be, or six feet deep. North, south, east, west — don't show yourself such disrespect.

I wish I could see you sing your sorrowful song

Incarceration:

Time Out Or Change?

You can look at being in here two different ways. You can look at one side of this as a time out or you can look at this as a time to change yourself for the better

You can look at this as being a time out, a slap on the hand. Tell your parents, the courts, your PO that you'll do good, and when you get out, you go back doing the same things that you were incarcerated for — smoking, using, running away, violating your probation, your court or the bracelet (electronic monitor.)

Or, you can look at this as a time to change your ways, coming up with a plan to stop using, running, violating everything. You can do it! Just stop being stupid. Use your smarts to do what you need to do.

I have a plan; people to help me, and an incentive to do good.

Help yourselves out! Don't come back!

-Kracker, Marin

From The Beat: Great advice, Kracker. What is your incentive to do good? What do you look forward to on the outs? How will you change your life? With what will you replace smoking, using, etc? Why do you think so many folks get nothing from being in Juvenile Hall? Insightful piece.

I Cry All The Time

To me, being in Juvy is just a big waste of time. This place doesn't really help anyone. All it is, is being locked up and having to participate in school that is like a fifth grade level.

In particular, I feel a lot better when I get out of Juvy, 'cause then I have the only thing worth living for, love. People here are here 'cause they did something that others think was wrong, but at the same time, many are here because a cop or someone has a bad temper and just didn't like you. And, of course, that's why I'm here.

The only thing that helps me get by the days is hoping that I will get out soon and be able to see the one person that I love with all of my heart. Yet I cry all of the time, because I can't stop thinking of my life and how much it sucks. Other than that, people just don't understand the way we are.

-Abby, Marin

From The Beat: Why is there only one person you love with all your heart, Abby? What about your family, friends, etc? Do you think that maybe loving only one person can put too much pressure on him/her for your happiness? What happens if that person has to go away from your life for some reason? What do you mean, "people just don't understand the way we are? Who is "we"? Why don't you explain in your writing to The Beat the way y'all are? Why does your life suck? How can you make it fun and productive?

Keep Him Locked Down

They say it's dangerous when we let him out

He's not changing; keep him locked down

I think he's banging, 'cause he's hangin'

Wit' kids who terrorize town

How can the Halls help me? Now, I'm in for nothin'

Wow, I'm in a worse situation

All day conversations

'Bout felonies, drinkin' and smokin' hella weed

When I get gone, I know mo' wrong

Than I did when I was out on the streets

So it's dangerous when they put me in the Halls, after all

-Tip, Marin

From The Beat: Is this the kind of life that you want to live? Is this what you really want for yourself? What else could you be, besides a danger? What other talents, experience or skills do you have? Also, can you make something positive out of being in Juvenile Hall rather than sulk and engage in the negative aspects?

It's Dangerous When...

It's dangerous when the system keeps people locked up for so long and then let them go.

I think after doing so long in an institution and then finally being let go is a problem waiting to happen because people have a lot of built up anger after being incarcerated for so long that they take their anger out on whatever and whenever. That's one of the reasons the system is a set up.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have a very good point here. What would you change about the system to avoid this problem? Would you create programs that deal with these kinds of issues? How does one approach this problem, or avoid it from happening?

Gotta Stop

Drugs will steal your soul

Eventually you will have to cross the bridge
and pay the toll

Grasping you and not letting you go

It will take your power of saying "no"

Searching for the next fat hit

Everyone noticing you're coming down,

'cause you're throwing a fit

Blowing the fattest cloud

Bragging to your friends,

showing you're proud

Now that you're losing your high

The littlest things will make you cry

Twisting and turning the pipe

The rest of the night

You'll stay hyped

Not knowing when to stop

Until you get busted by a cop

-Tanya, Marin

From The Beat: What attracted you about getting high? Does your desire for the drugs dominate your life on the outs? Can you stop using on your own if you want to? Do you want to stop? Do you want/need a drug program? Do you have anyone to go to for help?

A Bad "Eeeeeee"Trip

My worst trip or bad trip was when I was coming down from an ecstasy pill. A couple days later after dropping, I felt an emotional downfall.

The same day I was feeling down, I received a phone call from an ex-girlfriend and she told me she was pregnant, at this same time I was with my girlfriend of two years, so I was in a stuck situation.

The girl who was pregnant I didn't really care for at all, or didn't or couldn't see my life in the future with her, so I went into a state of shock. I overheated and ran as well as trying to kill myself, my mother called the mental ward and they tried to capture me, they failed.

Eventually I ran to a friend's house and they talked me into my senses. So, in the end drugs aren't the way to go. It may be fun while it last but the after effects can truly be detrimental to you as a person or your health.

The bad thing about it was the girl wasn't even pregnant, she thought she was and my coming down misperceived the whole situation.

-Ashton, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Oy! What a situation! Although we agree with you that drugs aren't the way to go, this situation is probably the result of sex without a condom, ya' think? It was definitely a bad trip, but one that can be avoided in the future. If getting someone pregnant gets this kind of reaction out of you, maybe you should think about protection when having sex. What do you think?

**the after effects can
truly be detrimental
to you as a person or
your health.**

Drank During Passing Period

Once, like in the ninth grade, me and some friends of mine were cutting school. Some one had stolen a bottle of Gin from Albertson's and we were chillin at this creek getting drunk (It was my first time drinking) and we were kickin' it having a good time untill a cop walked down the stairs and asked, "Okay what are we doing here?"

"Cutting school," I replied. (we were really drunk). So he hand cuffed us and brought us up the stairs.

At that time another cop showed up and checked the area. He found the bottle and said, "Oh, you guys forgot something!" So we knew we were screwed. The cops questioned everyone and let everybody go except me. I was the drunkest out of everyone. They where going to take me to the Hall but decided to be messed up and send me to the school resource officer. So they drove me up to school during passing period no less. Everyone in the school saw me in handcuffs while the cop had the nearly gone bottle of Gin in his hand.

People 'till this day still come up to me and say, "Hey, you're the kid that was drunk during passing period."

-Dominick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Why did you reply "cutting school"? Were you too drunk to lie? What do you make of this experience? Looking back are you ashamed of this, do you think it is funny. Were you embarrassed? Did you learn anything?

Sick And Hangry

I'm gonna get out and post
Get a bundle sack up and sell dope
Don't know how to sell hope so I stick to coke
Never caught a case for a drug crime
Let my mind off my money, so I'm doing time
The life I live, it's all I know
No particular plans
But to be the man
And get doe
Came from nothing
Got a little something
Now I want it all
From broke down apartments
To the Players Balls
Now I'm sitting sick
Hungry
And I wanting it all!

-G-Gully, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a nice flow you got here. But, what are you going to do once you get everything you want? What is it that you want? How are you doing time for taking your mind off your money? The only result of that is losing your money. Doing time, well, that's a result of committing a crime, no? Be hungry, get that doe, but know that the decisions you make, how you get that doe, will affect where your life will go, ya' know!

Getting Comfortable Here

It's dangerous when you locked up for so long and some people kind of get comfortable here and think it's their home.

But the sad part is that some people think being locked up with other criminals is going to teach you a lesson. But on the real, all you learn is the same criminal life everyone is in here for. So, why don't no one understand. But I ain't got no more time.

-Daddy Long Legs, 150 Crew

From The Beats: This is interesting. What do you think about all the room time, alone with your thoughts? Do you think people learn anything during that time? What would you change about the Hall? What does the Hall need in order to serve its purpose for youngsters?

Running From The Truth

My biggest thing that I have been running from was not having a father. That's the only thing that I have missed in my life.

I don't know what it would really be like because my father has been in prison all my life. I don't want that to happen to me, so I am not going to let that bring me down and I am going to keep my head straight.

-Chris, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: How are you gonna stay out of the system? How are you gonna be there for your kids, the way that you wish your father was for you?

doing it over

I would change my mom. She is so stupid. She sits on her butt all day and watches satellite TV because the shows come on three hours earlier than cable. That's why I'm in here, because she caused me to do drugs and drink to take away the stress, and actually have a little fun.

Scenario: This last Xmas there was so much stress around the house I went to my buddy's house and got really high and tried to ride my bike home. By the time I got home I went to my room and turned on my stereo and after the effects wore off I was told somebody called the police because I was disturbing the peace.

-Pete, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: A lot of things cause a lot of people to de-stress in illegal ways, but it ain't the peeps causing the stress getting locked up. Are you gonna let some household stress get in the way of your freedom? How can you escape the stress at home without risking getting locked up again?

**That's why I'm in here, because
she caused me to do drugs
and drink**

Escape

I wish I could escape
From the voices in my head
But there never seems to be any peace

When I try to run away
They're always forcin' me to stay
These voices tellin' me I'll never be free

Then when someone's by my side
And I decide I'll be all right
I'm always left alone and have no more hope

So now I'm stuck in hell
All by myself – I'm getting scared
Because these voices laugh and just won't let go

They're always tellin' me I'm worthless
What I did just wasn't worth this
Payin' the price for livin' the life of a thug

Fillin' my every thought with pain
Not a moment goes by when I feel sane
Trapped in a dark corner and I'm fiending for love

-Michael, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: You're looking at a life that few people can even imagine living. Everybody in the system writes about a time when they hit rock bottom. Do you think you've hit bottom? Rock bottom is losing almost all you got, but it also means that life gets better, one way or another. Do you have any voices that tell you that you can write, that others have walked in your shoes and still managed to succeed? Do you think there is a way to restore your hope? How?

Watch and Pay Attention

In my family, I see drugs. And I see a lot of kids wandering around everywhere.

My two sisters have babies. One has four kids, and the other one just had her first child. All I'm saying is, we don't need all of these kids — we just need a few to take care of.

Drugs, see, that's a different story. There shouldn't never have been any drugs, because it's just killin' people's insides! And that's sad. We sell them to our own people!

I think what we need to do is stop and think for a moment, and watch our own selves and what we do on the streets! My opinion is, I don't blame people for what they do or how they do it — but folks, just think before you act or do something.

Please just do it for your Black people and for your own safety — just think, "If you was in my shoes, how would I feel, someone selling me drugs that's killing me."

-Lee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Or ask the children of addicts how they feel about parents who seem to love drugs more than they love them. Drugs don't just kill individuals, they kill families; drugs send children into the street and into the system. If you can stay out of the drug trade at both ends (sales and consumption) you'll be a true friend to your family, your community and yourself. Props.

bqd trees

Ran into some weed that was bad

Didn't get high so I was mad

Three was on the blunt, so that made me even madder

I usually have my own but this time I got a tanner

Purple is what I really wanted

But that time I got something that came out the toilet

I didn't get high so I kicked the tube on

And ten minutes later I got my groove on

Got up kickin' an' screaming

And the next thing you know I was in the hospital beamin'

Leanin' on my mom's shoulder asking God to help

Saw the doctor and fought for my health

Found out I was okay

and the next thing I know I was on my way.

-Trowy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Did you learn any lessons from this situation? After this experience, have you smoked weed again? If so, why did you chance it? If no, why not? Can you imagine what your life would be like if you stopped smoking trees? What do you see?

Young Sam's Thoughts

What is it? This Young Sam hollerin' at y'all again from the 150 Crew. Nothing much on my mind just chillin' with nothin' to do obviously, for the simple fact I'm in jail, but it hasn't really been stressin' me like it used to.

I've been handling it kind of well. I'm supposed to be going to a group home for 5-6 months, but I haven't even got an interview yet. I don't even know who my probation officer is, and I've been waiting a month and a week almost.

I mean, what is this system coming to? I was supposed to go to court today and I didn't go. I don't know what it is, but they need to fix it. I mean, how would they feel if this was happening to them? You're supposed to treat people how you want to be treated. I'm not sayin' I'm an angel or nothin', but we get treated like animals in here and nobody. I mean, nobody should be locked up like a wild animal.

People make mistakes. Nobody's perfect. Everybody in the world has done something wrong. They can look back at it and say dang, that was stupid, and what if this and what if that. But to me, being locked up helps because it helps me sort out things. But it also makes things worse because it puts more stress on top of stress I already have, and that just keeps generating inside of me until one day I just can't hold it and I explode on somebody or something and then what happens — I'm right back here or I graduate to the Y or the pen. And when I get there the cycle starts over and gets even worse.

But me, I'm gon' stop the cycle right here in the Hall, and if you listen — you can too. It's a hard task but once it's done — it's worth it. But in a way it's easy. First you have to get rid of all your old negative habits and find some positive ones. Then you have to find positive people to hang out with. Not saying that you have to cut your old friends off, just put them on hold for a minute and go to school and see what changes occur.

To be continued...

-Young Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have identified two separate problems here, those that the Hall has (missing court appointments, for example, or treating you like an animal), and those that you have. Very wisely, you have chosen to work on the problems you have since you can't change the Hall. How will you go about ridding yourself of old negative habits? What positive habits and people do you hope to put in their place? We're eager to see how you continue this piece.

Feelings

The thing that hurts me the most now that I'm in the Hall is the way that I was treating everyone that I really cared for and loved. I never really appreciated the way that they cared for me.

They always used to tell me not to do anything bad and I never used to listen to them. But now that I'm in the Hall, the thing that hurts me the most is when I think about the times when they used to tell me not to do anything bad 'cause now I realize what they were trying to tell me by that.

I took everything for granted when I was on the outs, but now every time my dad comes and sees me, I don't want him to leave 'cause now I know how much he really loves and cares for me. All I'm trying to say is that I should've never took them for granted, and now I regret not listening to them.

-Lil' Carlos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Can you make up for the past with your family? When you get out, how can you show them that you truly care for them and love them — more than you love whatever you put before them? What can you do to make their lives easier?

**To be home, to
just be free
Or make
everyone come in
here with me**

Built Or Broken

To be silent or outspoken

This place can't break you or make you

But it sure as hell can strain you

Crazy from the walls

Dive deep into an emotional fall

Inside this hell, you can't stand tall

You're doomed to fall

These staff, most don't care

About what's right, "we're not here to be fair"

And when I sit in my room, I can think of only pain

I can't stop these thoughts, that drive me insane

At visiting I can't stand to see my mom

I think of her, my house, my friends, and I long

To be home, to just be free

Or make everyone come in here with me

-Ray-Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ray-Ray, you say that this place (the Hall) can't break you or make you. While in the Hall, some learn a lesson, some get angry, some get depressed; sometimes it's up to you. Do you think you have the choice to decide how you are going to deal with the situation? Is there staff there that is willing to help? If you want to be surrounded by your friends and family, the best scenario is probably reuniting on the outs with them, rather than in the Hall with you, what do you think? How does/will the Hall affect you?

Building Positive Ideals

I feel like being in this program here at Camp Sweeney, is really building a lot of positive ideals about what I want to do when I get out. And it's making me think about who I want to be with when I'm free.

I also think that being in here has helped me because it has me thinking about what I'm going to do in the future with my life. What I mean is, when I get out — I'm going to change a lot of my ways. I'll be hanging out with my family instead of my do-whatever-for-the-money so-called friends. And I'm going to try to find a job, some way to make money other than selling drugs.

-Young Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Remember how you'd be out in the rain slanging. Keep asking friends, family, neighbors, and staff right here at Camp — about where you might find a job. And don't quit trying; just keep applying till you get what you want!

It's Dangerous When...

It's dangerous when you don't know where you are going to end up in the future. If you don't have plans for yourself, you will end up playing "the game," being involved in drugs and gang violence that leads to nowhere but being prosecuted or even death. There is nothing in "the game" that is positive for yourself in the present and in the future.

For example, let's say you are actually successful in "the game" and start making the big bucks. Well, you're going to end up spending that money, causing you to commit more illegal actions to get more money.

Once again, it takes you absolutely nowhere in life. As they say, you can't play the game forever.

-Carl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A man without a plan is destined to be lost. You seem to know you won't be playing the game forever, but do you know what you will start doing with your life? What are your future plans? Where do your interests lie and how will you pursue what you want to do?

thoughts

Today I'm in a good mood. By being in a good mood, it brings back memories of my dead folks, feel me? Because when I'm happy, I always think back to when we used to be on one and the stuff we've been through. But at the same time, it makes me think about how a ninja so close to me lost his life in a blink of an eye.

Damn, I never thought it would come to the point where I would be locked up when two of my folks got smoked, and I couldn't "touch-down" at none of their funerals. But I think to myself, "maybe I came to this so-called 'jail' for a reason," because damn, if I would've been on the outs, I probably wouldn't be here to write this piece because every ninja wit' dreads is a movin' target.

RIP Lil' Mikey, Lil' C, Lil' Dan, and to everyone who lost their lives to these cold-hearted streets.

-Lil' Molly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know it must be horrible to be unable to say goodbye to your friends — and even more horrible that people your age have to say goodbye at all. But don't forget that these people have a new home now — in heaven and in your heart. How can you keep their memory alive? When you are released, how can you make sure that you stay safe? How can you avoid being a moving target?

Dangerous

It's dangerous when
you're out on the street
It's dangerous when
your heart skips a beat
It's dangerous when
you don't use your brain
It's dangerous when
there's lightening and rain
It's dangerous when
you don't think about your future!

-Josh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What can you do to keep yourself out of danger? How do you protect yourself? Do you think about your future? What do you see?

To Whom This May Concern:

I'm glad to be in here and be able to open my eyes and realize what I was doing and the way I was going about it.

There are two ways to go about everything that you do in the "game." One way is to go to school, get a job, handle your business as a man, and still be able to kick it on the block. That's the right way to go about things, but if you want to go about it the wrong way, you will end up in here. So, if I were you, I would do the right thing so you won't end up in here.

Anyways, this is my first time in here and the system is trying to give me ten years. I wish I was on the outs so I could do the right thing and still be kickin' it on the block.

But anyways, I would like to say rest in peace "El Toro" and "Snoopy." Much love and respect to all the fallen soldados.

-Negro, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes, just kicking it on the block can get you caught up. Do you think it's possible to kick it on the block and stay out of trouble? If you were given the chance to go back in time, how would you go about things differently? What do you need to give or give up in order to maintain in this life?

Empathy

Like I was saying to the peeps out there, I now feel for the people that I did wrong, and I now know what it is to suffer the consequences. I wish I can take it all back and never rob that old dude for I feel now what he felt when we took his money.

Now I also know that I should start over and do good for once in my so-called "gypsy" life. Change for the good, not for the bad. Never again will I ever hurt a person like I did.

And to The Beat, yes I am a changed person. No more plotting and conniving. I no longer can be that thief that I was 'cause now I found God, and I wish that I could start over again so I could do my best in life 'cause we only live once!

I pray for the peeps I did bad to. "Gypsy" George is out.

-Gypsy George, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How did you find God? When you feel the pain of your victim, it's called empathy, and it's one of the most human and humane emotions we have. We're glad that you are a changed person. Do you like being the person you are right now? You not only can start over ("today is the first day of the rest of your life"), but we believe you already have started over, and we are proud of you for doing it!

Mixed Emotions

Being in the Hall got me thinking. Damn it, this place sucks. I can't smoke, I can't drink, I can't be with my patnas, and most of all, I can't be with my family. Yeah, we got visits, but that's only three times a week. Visits are just to tease you about what you're missing — my moms, and once in a while, pops will come and visit me.

My moms used to visit me every day, but now she got herself a job and she can only come and visit me once a week. I got love for her and I'm glad that she got her job back. Even though I can't smoke or drink, I'm kinda glad because staff got me runnin' 100 laps and got me doing different workouts to keep me in shape.

On the outs, people wouldn't give me that much attention, except for my moms. Shhh, I need to get in shape because on the outs, the only runnin' that I was doing was from dem boys (police).

The problem is as soon as my door shuts, I feel like just another number in the system, an object and not a person. These four walls will be my motivation for not coming back. Oh yeah, they give us phone calls once in a while, too, but phone calls cost money and my momma tells me not to call because it costs. So I don't get to talk to my patnas much.

Big ups to all my patnas on the outs and locked down. Never give up!

-Big Samoa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "Without a healthy body you cannot have a healthy mind" — an old saying. It sounds like the Hall is doing you some just. Do you think that you could keep these healthy and positive habits when you are released? How do you deal with your mixed emotions while you're in the Hall, especially when you're locked in your room?



**I need to get in shape
because on the outs, the
only runnin' that I was
doing was from
dem boys**

Lil' Ray And Boog Money's Page

thug on the Line

Well, I got brought into the game by copying my older brother. I wanted to be just like him when I was younger. He was bangin', so I started bangin'. He practically raised me 'cause when we were growin' up, he showed me the ropes and taught me how to be a soljah and stay strong.

He got me through anything no matter what the circumstance was, but I started watchin' him and other older people slang and makin' money, so I tried it for a minute. I did it 'cause I needed to make money, so I could buy my own stuff 'cause I didn't want my mom stressin' off of money.

My mom was doing her best to pay bills and by the end of the month, she would be broke with nothin' left. That's why I had to do stuff for myself, so why not start while I was young? I felt it was kinda hard because I had to stay on my toes, watchin' for the cops and gang rivals, so you know I had to be down for mines, make my money, and smash rivals all at the same time, plus anybody else who got in the way. I was carryin' psitols, (fully-loaded), and sometimes large quantities of drugs at the same time, while I was ridin' in "stolos!" It was hard, but I did it all.

That's how I earned respect quickly 'cause people recognize game when they meet me.

-Lil' Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you think that you would have chosen a different road if you had grown up in a different environment? If you could go back in time, would you have chosen a different path? When you are released, will you continue on the same road or will you switch it up?

A bad trip...

My bad trip was comin' to the Halls,
waking up downtown

Being told to roll up wasn't something I planned on
waking up to

But you know... the opposite of what you chose to do
always happens

But bad trips are everywhere

It just depends on the situation and the outcome

Bad trips get folks killed

RIP Ray-Ray

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That does sound like a bad trip. We like how you twisted the topic into your own take on a bad trip. If everything happens for a reason, what did you learn from this experience? Do bad trips just "happen," or do you exercise some control over whether a trip is bad or good?

**I earned
respect quickly
'cause people
recognize game
when they
meet me.**

Drugs

Drugs do harmful things

Your brain dies and your soul weeps

Hardcore drugs make a married man cheat

But when he comes down off that high,

He begins to see that drugs made him weak.

He lost everything from his family to his feet.

Now it's eating him up

'cause that drug wasn't that sweet.

Drugs also make you feel good for ten minutes,

and then after that feelin' is gone,

you start cravin' for it again,

and those cravings become stronger

and your pockets begin to feel lonely

'cause there's nothing in 'em but...

a pocket full of stones.

After his high was gone,

he said it to himself

that drugs made me lose my home.

RIP Ray-Ray

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Tight poem! Drugs can make a person do crazy things. How have drugs affected your life on a personal level? Why do you think folks turn to drugs in the first place? How long do you think folks have been taking things to alter their reality? Do you think drugs affect different people in different ways?

reel talk 2004

I sit and wonder why the streets go dumb

My boy got shot in the face with a "thump"

Man, why do the streets go dumb?

We had the same rims, fitted up in the same "Tims"

Now look what that gun did to him

Talkin' 'bout, "Let's get this green, let's get this money"

But when a gun is at yo' head, stuff isn't too funny

But all you had on your mind was

"Let's get this money"

The streets go "dumb", but it ain't too funny.

RIP "Ray-Ray"

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What is it about the streets that make them so appealing, and so appalling? Why do so many folks go that route? Why are people willing to take a life or give up their own life over money? Are material objects addicting? Is the excitement addicting? What is it?

Happy Father's Day

Check this out. I haven't seen my dad for almost two years.

I saw him when I was little, but it was off and on. But for some reason, he came to see me last week. He barely found out that I was in here after I've already been in here for four months.

When he came, I told him that I didn't want to ever see him again. I told him to leave. How is he going to try to come back into my life and try to tell me what to do? He got me messed up. I basically smashed on him with words, and he got the picture.

I don't need his punk ass in my life to make it in life. I've made it through life 17 years without him, so why would I need him now? All I got to say is forget him. My mom and my brother raised me, took care of me, and showed me the love that I needed.

-Lil' Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Why do you think your "father" wants to get back into your life now? It's understandable to feel hostile or angry towards your father, but who feels the most pain? Your anger is eating you up inside and that anger will only bring you down. If you can find forgiveness, then you will be able to heal. It may be a slow healing process but it will be liberating. When you find forgiveness, then and only then — will you truly be free.

the system

i look down on my past that didn't last 'cause it went too fast
mind has a rash so i filled my lungs up with hella ash
i hate my father with a passion 'cause i see myself in him
grew up too fast now i blew up and walk straight into the system
and now my son's comin' on the way in twenty-seven days
what can i say when i'm locked in chains i hope he's okay
the nights are gettin' colder wastin' time i'm gettin' older
i'm strong but i can't carry the whole world on my shoulders
i'm not afraid to say i need support but my time's short
and i never thought the biggest thing in my way would be in court
now i accepted hatred fo' any human being wit' a badge
'cause they act like they different from us if i was them i'd be mad
where were they born from a woman well i got a surprise
so was i so what make you so special ya dignity and ya pride
well i got that too so state no excuse just accept the truth
y'all locked in a booth so go ahead an' lie through ya front tooth
you can't lie to ya'self but i bet you'll lie to me
but every time i speak up for myself y'all turnin' left with a key
i guess it's ya only defense it's okay as long as ya happy
just don't come my way when ya life is tied up and nappy

-Scooby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's natural to feel hostility toward those who lock you down and hold the key, but for your son's sake you've got to go deep till you see — you've got to take the responsibility for you and what you choose to do with your life. And even if what sent you this way yesterday was a broken family and a broken heart, you still have to take responsibility for your part in what brought you to where you are today. We're not talking about blame or shame or putting a bad name on your son's father, but you need to stop wasting time and energy on the faults of others and concentrate on your own transformation to be a good father. Don't be like yours was to you. The only cure for incarceration is to change how you think, feel and do — keep the focus on you.

Faith's Bad Drag Trip

Well, about a year and a half ago, I lived up in a small town that was very boring and dull. The only thing interesting or fun to do was drugs. So I did a lot of them.

One day, I was at my friend Brian's house, and I had just done heroin and PCP. Anyways, after a while, we kinda had a party going; and somehow I ended up on the roof of the front of his house with a rope around my neck and the other end tied to the roof's drainpipe.

About ten of my friends were all bowing down to me on the front lawn, because we were all claiming I was God! Anyways, we all said if I was truly God, I could jump off the roof and not die. So, I jumped and twisted my ankle!

We found out the roof was fourteen feet high, and the rope was fifteen feet long! So, the rest of the day, I hurt. And I started to get really sick. I ended up in the emergency room for almost twelve hours. Then they put me in detox for thirty-two days.

-Faith, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If God is all love and compassion, and you are God — then, that one foot of extra rope gave you one more chance to explore the divine nature of what it is to be human. Instead of trying to hide from all your pain behind heroin (which always has more pain in store for you anyway), realize that Godhood is feeling compassion for all who feel pain. Also, you need to know, your brain is neither boring nor dull, and you need no drugs to find entertainment inside your lively skull. We're so glad you survived that small-town drug scene! Now stay clean.

**i'm not afraid
to say i need
support but my
time's short
and i never
thought the
biggest thing in
my way would be
in court**

Me Está Reconstruyendo

Yo me siento que me estan dando la oportunidad de reconstruirme porque aqui me estoy dando cuenta de mi mal compartimiento. Yo no me porto mal todo el tiempo, sólo aveces. Sí, estoy perdiendo mi tiempo porque con el tiempo que estoy gastando aqui encerrado, yo hubiera podido estar trabajando y no perdiendo mi tiempo aqui.

Lo bueno de la Juvenile es que me levanta el auto-sistema con los ejercicios de la escuela porque yo nunca he tratado de aprender Inglés anteriormente y aqui estoy aprendiendo. Me da colera no saber hablar el Inglés, pero no me doy por vencido porque sé que aunque me tarde, lo aprenderé y allí estaré contento.

From The Beat: Esperamos que sigan reconstruyendote para no volverla a regar. Nos da mucho gusto que aunque estes perdiendo tu tiempo estés aprendiendo mucho con esto. No te desespere si no puedes hablar el Inglés en este momento, preocúpate en aprender y en no olvidar tu lengua nativa que es el Español.

It's Rebuilding Me

I feel like they are giving me the opportunity to rehabilitate myself because I'm realizing how bad my behavior was. I don't misbehave all the time, just sometimes. Yes, I am wasting my time with the time that I am wasting being incarcerated, I could have been working and not wasting my time in here.

The good thing about Juvenile is that it is helping me build by self-esteem with the exercises that they give us in school because I have never tried to learn English before, and in here, I'm doing it. It makes me mad not knowing how to speak English. I don't let it get the best of me because sooner or later, I will get the hang of the English language. When I do, I will be happy.

-Manuel, Marin

**I ended up in the emergency room
for almost twelve hours**

Es Peligroso Cuando...

Es Peligroso cuando aquella persona está enferma de los pulmones, o cualquier otra enfermedad física o mental, y cuando consume demasiada drogas, y nunca no tiene lo que tiene. También el tabacco es peligroso porque hace bastante daño al aparato respiratorio. El humo del tabacco y de las drogas causan enfermedades físicas y acaban las ganas de salir adelante en esta vida. Pierdes el afecto de ir a la escuela, y también se empieza a terminar la comunicación con tus padres, hermanos, y con toda la familia. Es por esa razón que uno debe de mantenerse fuera de todos los vicios tanto como el alcohol, las drogas, y el tabacco.

En la juvenile te encierran para que nos demos cuenta del error, o la falta de autoridad que cometimos por la razón que nos detubieron. Asi podemos recapacitar y no volver hacer cosas contra la ley.

From The Beat: Te agradecemos por la ayuda en querer que estos muchachos vean lo peligroso que son las drogas, y el humo del cigarro. Aunque nadie lo quiera entender esto es verdad. Nosotros hemos visto como hay gente que se muere de cancer, y gente que tienen ollos en cuello para poder respirar porque dañaron sus sistema respiratorio por culpa del humo de estas cosas. Esperamos que tú nunca llegues a caer a este lugar.

It's Dangerous When...

It's dangerous when someone is sick from their lungs, or whatever other physical or mental sickness, and consumes way too many drugs, and they don't get what they need. Also, tobacco is dangerous because it causes way too much harm to your respiratory system.

The smoke from tobacco and drugs cause physical harm and they kill off any ambition to come out ahead in this life. You lose the urge to go to school and your interaction with your parents, brothers, and with the entire family. It's because of that reason that you should keep yourselves away from all bad habits like alcohol, drugs, and tobacco.

In Juvenile, they lock you up so we can see our mistakes or our defiance of authority that we did, all because we are locked-up. By realizing our errors, we are able to rehabilitate

-José, No Unit

El humo del tabacco y de las drogas causan enfermedades físicas y acaban las ganas de salir adelante en esta vida

desperdiciando mi tiempo

Bueno, antes que nada les quiero decir que ondas a homies y a homegirls que estan en las Juveniles.

Bueno, pues como ya saben, yo por mi parte nomas aqui desperdiciando mi tiempo. Este es el tiempo en que podemos hacer algo en la vida y mejorar nuestro futuro. Deberíamos de estar estudiando, buscando un trabajo, estar con tu familia o con tu novia por lo menos. ¿Sabes que estas desperdiciando tu tiempo?

Cuando estaba afuera, no iba a la escuela, tampoco tenía trabajo, pero por lo menos estaba con las personas que yo quería en mi vida como mi familia, especialmenet mi novia, y mis homies.

Cuando yo salga, voy a estar con ellos. Es por eso que yo digo que estando aqui es sólo una pérdida de tiempo. Para mí el tiempo que estoy perdiendo aqui es dinero y oro.

Necesitan estar trucha homies. Si salen de la Juvenil, no regresen porque sino los van a mandar para C.Y.A. Yo creo que no me quieren acompañar. verdad? Pero, si los manda allí los wacho allí y que se acuerden de esto que los estoy diciendo tu homie "Lil' Droopy."

From The Beat: Estas en lo cierto lo único que estas haciendo en estos momentos es desperdiciar tu tiempo por la cual la deberias de estar disfrutando en muchas otras cosas más. Creemos que es lo justo que deberias de hacer, estar con la gente que quiere lo mejor de ti. Este tiempo que estas perdiendo lo deberias de estar tomando para hacer otras cosas diferentes. Hay muchisimas cosas que hacer y no es normal que estes gastando el tiempo en cosas tontas. Abre los dos ojos, que son los únicos que te pueden dejar ver.

wasting my time

Well, before we begin, I want to say "what's up" to all homies and homegirls that are in Juvenile.

Well, like you already know, I for my part, I'm in here wasting my time. We could be using this time to do something with ourselves and make our future better. We should be studying, getting a job, or being with the people who you love the most. Do you know you are wasting your time?

When I was on the outs, I didn't go to school and I also didn't work, but at least I was with the people who I love in life like my family, especially my girlfriend, and with my homies as well.

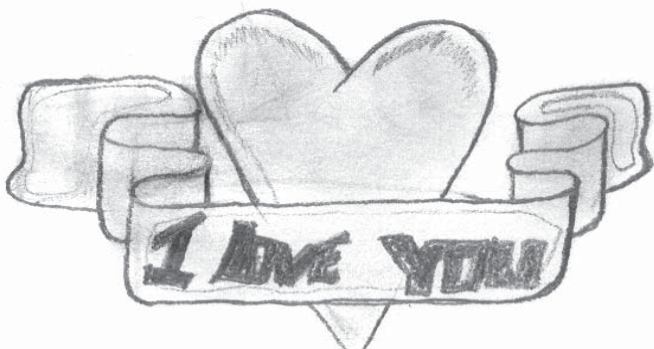
When I get out, I'm going to be with them. That's why I say being in here is just a waste of time, and for me, time is money and gold that I am wasting being in here.

You need to watch your backs homies. If y'all get out of Juvenile, don't come back because if y'all do, y'all could get sent to CYA, but I believe that they don't want to accompany me, right? But, if they send y'all over there, I'll see you later. Remember what your homie, "Lil' Droopy", told you.

Watch your backs homies. Until later.

-Lil' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

THE BEAT WITHIN



Es Peligroso Cuando.....

Es peligroso cuando usas drogas porque puede ser que la droga tenga otras cosas que no sepas, como esta vez que yo me fume un cigarrillo de mota. Me lo fumé antes de ir a la escuela, llegue a la escuela bien loco, me sente en mi mesa y todos se me quedaron viendo y pense que ellos sabían que estaba loco porque se podía ver en mis ojos y oler en mi aliento. Después me empezó a doler la espalda y me sentí bien mal. Yo estaba sudando. Me salí de la clase sin decirle nada al professor quien se me quedo viendo, pero no me dijo nada. Me fuí a sentar en unas escaleras de la escuela por diez minutos porque me dolía bastante. Un amigo me preguntó que tenía y le dije que no me sentía bien. Me lebrantó y ya no sentía el dolor pero todavía estaba sudando. El me llebó a la oficina del principal, director de la escuela, y me preguntaron que tenía y yo le dije que no me sentía bien y me dejo ir a mi casa. Regrese el proximo día y pensé que me iba a suspender o algo así, pero él me dijo que me miraba mal y que si me sentía mejor. En el recreo, volvi a fumar mota, pero esta vez me senti normal, bien "high", pero no es bueno fumar.

Yo soy necio y no aprendí mi lección. Cuando vine al Hall de San Francisco, me ponían a correr por siete minutos, y no podía hacer ni 30 segundos. Ahora que he estado aqui por un buen tiempo, puedo correr los siete minutos y hasta jugar un partido de volleyball. Entonces, no fumes. No es bueno. Dime lo ¿que es que ganas cuando fumas? ¿Y que pierdes?

From The Beat: Chale, la verdad es que tienes que tener más cuidado con lo que vas a fumar. Pasastes por una experiencia mala, y la mera neta es que aunque eso fuera sido mota, también estas poniendo tu vida en peligro. Tienes que buscar la manera en como ver el error que estas cometiendo, porque si sigues en este camino no vas a llegar muy lejos que digamos. Tienes que parar de andar haciendo cosas malas. Ahora en día, todo está corrupto y hay mucha mescla en todas las drogas. Cuida tu vida y todo lo que te sea útil en tu alrededor.

It's Dangerous When...

It's dangerous when you use drugs because drugs may have other things that you don't know. Like this one time that I smoked a blunt filled with weed. It was about half the size of a cigarette and I smoked it before I went to school. I arrived to school ripped. I sat down at my desk. Everybody kept staring at me and I was thinking in my head, "maybe they know", because you could see it in my eyes, and you could smell it on my breath.

My back started to hurt and I felt very bad. I was sweating. I stepped out of class without asking the teacher for permission who saw me walk out of class. All he did was stare at me, but he didn't say anything to me. I went to go sit down on some stairs. My back was killing me. I laid down on the stairs and about ten minutes later, a friend of mine asked me what was wrong with me, and I told him that I wasn't feeling too well. He picked me up, and I no longer felt the pain, but I was still sweating.

He took me to the principal's office, (the head of the school), and he asked me what was wrong with me. I told him that I wasn't feeling too good and he let me go home. I came back the next day thinking that I was going to get suspended or get some form of punishment, but all the principal said when saw me was that I still didn't look too well and if I felt better.

During recess, I again smoked weed, but this time I felt "normal", but very high. Regardless, it's not good to smoke. I am hard-headed and I did not learn my lesson. When I came to San Francisco's Juvenile Hall, they made me run around for seven minutes and I couldn't even last 30 seconds. Now that I've been in here for a long time, I can run for seven minutes and even play volleyball. So, in conclusion, don't smoke. Let me know, "What is it that you win when you smoke?" Also, "what do you lose?"

-Mario B2, SF/YGC



Me Ayuda Y Perjudica

¿Que onda Beat? Durante el tiempo que he estado aqui, siento que el sistema me ha estado ayudando y me está perjudicando al mismo tiempo. Me esta ayudando porque me estan dando un escarmiento, pero no volver, me ayuda a ser responsable, y a pensar mejor antes de actuar.

Pero, me está perjudicando porque no estoy afuera, no estoy con mi familia, y porque me esta alejando de mi vida, etc.....

Me siento mejor cuando salgo del sistema porque vuelvo a ser libre. He aprendido mis lecciones para no volver, alejarme de las problemas, etc.

From The Beat: Esperamos que esta vez aprenda la lección para que ya no vuelva a caer al mismo ollo. Nos gusta escuchar que esto te ayudará a componer tu vida y a ver los errores que has estado haciendo. Te deseamos mucha suerte.

It Helps Me And Hurts Me

What's up Beat? During the time that I've been incarcerated, I feel like the system is helping me and hurting me. It's helping me because they are giving me a punishment, but I don't want to come back. It helps me be responsible, to think better before I act.

It's hurting me because I am not outside, I am not with my family, and because it's separating me from my outside life, etc.

I feel better when I get out of the system because I can be free again. I have learned my lesson so I won't come back here, and to distance myself from my problems, etc.

-Postrulo B2, SF/YGC

Droopy And Lil' Cell's Page

thinking 'bout Life

I just been thinking 'bout life, feel me, and what it has to offer. I mean, man — life is in front of us! So I'm gon' take advantage of mine.

See, now I'm really in the system. The judge ain't goin' out! I wanna go home, but he' not tryin'a feel it. So now I'm going to a group home. But this thang gon' be new, feel me; first time I'm goin' to one.

But I look at it like this, feel me — this is my chance to get away for a min'. You know, and get my priorities together, and get out on some legit thang, feel me.

But, now, I got a question for you ninjas. Why do your run? I mean ninjas supposed to be hard. Why run from your problem? Me, I'm gon' handle mine, positive or negative, feel me!

But, now — I can't and I'm not tellin' ninjas how to do yo' thang, feel me! I'm just the passenger, you' the driver. I can only give you my insight.

But you a gangsta, you go dumb! So you don't listen. So while you' doin' a hundred, don't pull the e-brake unless it's an emergency, feel me!

To my peoples in here, keep it thuggin'. They tryin'a do me, but I know my way back.

-Lil' Cell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The first time doing anything, will have you wondering how it's gonna be and how you're gonna deal with this or that. But if you've made up your mind, to do your program and finish your time, everything will turn out fine. And you know, it won't be positive or negative, it will be positive and negative! And it'll keep flippin'! But you'll be cool if you don't let it set you to trippin'.

Hold back MY tears

man this shhh is crazy
it's like where do i go from here
i gotta maintain for a year
but that's not what i fear
tryin'a hold back my tears
who would have thought
of such strong emotions
i mean you caught my lips on fire
and now i refuse to swallow an ocean
the source of love i have for you
is always and forever
yo' heart i'm in now
an' walking out i will never
for your love i don't have to think twice
it's something i crave
i got it so i'm gon' keep it in my life

-Lil' Cell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A man could walk through hell without falling apart, as long as he knows he has love in his heart. Hold tight to whatever gets you through this extended night.

**The judge
ain't goin'
out! I wanna
go home,
but he' not
tryin'a feel it.**

Rest In Peace Snoopy

after my patna died
my life changed
he was the one
that was always there
i didn't believe it
but then i went
to the scene of the accident
and it was true
he was dead
then i went
to his mom's house
to help her out
after the funeral
helping his grandma out
by coming through
talking to her
and being there
for miguel's
little brother

-Droopy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's coo' that you come through to help the grieving family. Nothing can bring him back, but his family needs all the help and support they can get. RIP Miguel aka Snoopy.

getting sent to the pen'

it's tragic when i hear
about my friend
getting a thirty-five to life
for something little
it's tragic watching
my friend get sent to the pen'
the system treats us like slaves
with the governor tryin' to make it
two meals a day in the pen'
they have people working
for twenty cents an hour
like we're not worth nothing
rest in peace snoopy

-Droopy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They say the pendulum of public opinion has swung back again, and most people oppose anyone getting a severe third-strike sentence for a non-violent crime. Meanwhile, you have to treat yourself with enough respect to stop making foolish decisions when you're free on the outs.

it's About that time

yeah i'm lil' cell
and half of half you ninjas
don't know me
'cause i'm not one of these
game-goofy-azz ninjas
whose goal is to be known
i'm a ninja that stay low
ducked off in the cuts feel me
a ninja who don't really communicate
but if you had a childhood like mine
you would know what brought me
to this point in life
but yeah like i was sayin'
some of you ninjas feel me
some don't but you
the ones i'm talkin' 'bout feel me
the ones i watch from the cuts
yeah you ninjas look real silly from here
but for ninjas like me
it's about that time
you know and to my ninjas
that feel me
handle your business
do your time
and leave the system behind

-Lil' Cell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Remember when all those folks wanted to be "hot boys" and now they're all the system's toys. Now you're in the cuts of time, looking at what's wrong and what's right — seeing your way to survive and how to move on with your life.

**do your time
and leave the system behind**

"Built Or Broken"

Nothin' Good

There ain't nothin' good about the Hall, the police, or the DA, feel me? What's so good about trying to get me to cop a deal for three or four years? There's nothin' good about the Hall. The staff is ancient, trying to "geese" 'cause we're locked up and they got them keys. Straight up, but it's nothin'.

Popping E's, stayin' lit, drinkin', robbin', and going on 18. I caught a bad trip when after a lil' function I cut. I drove around, messin' wit lil' females wit' my patna. He ended up gettin' into a lil' problem with the law and had to "kick" it on them. We ended up getting wrapped up and not even knowing where I was.

I woke up the next morning trippin' when they said, "Morning, wash up." Ain't nothin' good about the Hall, feel me? All it does is wrap you up. It's a set up. It's the system. There's only one way in, and one way out. My self-esteem is cool considering where I am. It can't build on nothin' 'cause when something happens, it will bring me right back down where it was at.

As for me, I'm tryin' to get out and do my thang and be wit' my real patnas, not all these "J-Cat" ninjas that be actin' and pretendin' they' hard, but are soft as cotton. I'll never be the one to go out or break down.

-Lil' Rocky

From The Beat: As the old saying goes, "those who choose to play will pay." Do you think that the price you're paying now is worth all the fun you was having out there on the streets? Why do you think people like to front like they're hard when they're soft like marshmallows? What do you think the world would be like if people were to show their true emotions? If doing your thang means the same stuff that got you here in the first place, what makes you think the result will be different this time?

Waste Of Time

When I'm behind these walls I feel like I'm just wasting my time in here. I can be outside doing something instead of being in here wasting my life.

-Antonio

From The Beat: What can you do to get out and stay out of the system? What would you be doing on the outside if you weren't here?

Heartbroken

i feel heartbroken
when you're not around
because i love you
instead of blue i'm brown
i feel when you need me
it hurt me a lot
you are so lonely
like an oil-less robot
you need me to comfort you
because you need the love
you are my angel
that god sent from above
now that you left me
i feel so down
i love you and i need you
without you i wear a frown
girls are attracted to me
i always think of you
i wish you were here with me
because baby i still love
— you

-Bilal

From The Beat: The best thing you can do for her and for you, is to make sure when you leave the Hall — you're through with the life that led to your fall. For love, give up the life of a thug.

This Is My First Time

This is my first time in the Hall, and at first I didn't like it at all. But now that I've been here awhile, I'm getting used to it.

This unit is better than my last one, because in this one we get to be out more. So, before it was helping me want to become a better person, but now it's more like a little bit of fun. But I still feel it, not being home in my own bed by myself in my own room.

-Fernando

From The Beat: It's a relief when you begin to get used to a place like this, because you've been so full of anxiety and stress! Yet when you find yourself coming back for longer and longer stays, getting used to it seems at best a mixed blessing.

building myself

While being locked up behind these walls, I have been given an opportunity to think about all the things I've been doing on the streets.

I'm up in here for a reason. 'Cause just before I came in here, I almost could've died. So God is just telling me to wake up 'cause I'm here to accomplish something while I'm here in this world. So while I'm up in the Hall I've been thinking everyday about what I'm going to do when I touch down on the outs.

They sending me back to camp so that's a blessing right there. 'Cause they way I was headed was to CYA for about eighteen months. But God has been with me since I've been in here. I've been reading the Bible. And in the Bible it says you have to have patience.

I finally realized that since I've been up in here. But it's time for me to go. So I'll finish writing on this next week.

RIP Lil Thomas, Zillion, Dre.

-Cold Gz

From The Beat: What is it that you are supposed to accomplish? It sounds like you are talking about living a positive life. Looking back on your life in the streets, what do you think about it? Do you have regrets? What is it about your religious awakening that makes you want to change your life?

I could be doing more time for this crime than what I am doing.

Better and Worse

I think being locked up in here, makes me feel both better and worse. Sometimes I feel worse when I think about my girlfriend on the out — and the fact that I can't be with her right now.

I feel better when I think about the fact that I could be worse off than this! I could be doing more time for this crime than what I am doing. So I just pray all the time, and I hope that God can help me out with this problem.

-Darryl

From The Beat: You will get through incarceration, but the problem you'll still be facing — is the decision-making you do when you're free — the crime not the time, should be the real problem on your mind!

Bailt Or Broken?

Being in here, I feel like it's a waste of time. When I leave, I usually feel better about myself because I'm free. I also feel like this being in here doesn't do anything for you. It doesn't help you at all. Sometimes it makes you want to hit the block even harder. Then you realize what might happen to you and you think about being legit.

Nothing in here builds my self-esteem. Everything breaks down, except when I get visits. An example of what helps my positive sense during incarceration is knowing that one day, I will get out.

-Jp

From The Beat: Time, much like life, is what you make it. How can you make sure that you use your time in the Hall productively? How can you make sure that you're learning things rather than wasting time? Have you ever thought that maybe being in the Hall is saving you from something worse? When you focus on that day you will get out, what do you picture yourself doing? Is it something that will move you forward, or move you back?

Built 'Cause I'm Thinkin'

The Hall has provided me with time to think to myself and find out what good I will do on the outside.

-Ashton

From The Beat: This is good. So? What are all the great things you're going to do? Share with us, we want to hear about what exactly you thought about. What makes you different from all those individuals locked up that don't think about doing good when they get out. Share your wisdom. What is it about time in the Hall that makes someone want to change?

Life behind bars

Life can be easy and life can be hard, but how can we enjoy life behind bars, constantly on lock down, being told how to act? I never dealt with this shhh on Hayward's track.

I was on the streets tightening my hustle, selling them bundles, flexin' my money muscle, never stressin' off the cops, always in the cuts, always down for my 'hood.

So now peep game and check play, locked in my cell all day,

with nothing to do but have shame of being locked away.

-Ant-Dog

From The Beat: From your description of your life on the streets, we can't believe you're surprised to find yourself a guest of the county. If that surprises you, then you'd better check yourself, because only a fool would expect a different result than the one you're currently living. If you like living here, and look forward to even tighter controls and less freedom, then go back to doing what you were doing. If you don't like it here, you'd better think up a new game to play.

feeling stuck

Juvenile Hall does not build me, All it does is bring me down sometimes.

It makes me think about what I do, But all it does is makes me go crazy too.

You sit in between four walls all day And they say pray.

But it does not change anything, Because you still in here 'til this day.

I never would have thought my life would turn out this way,

But this is some bullshhh, I have to say.

-Tasha

From The Beat: Nice flow you got going on here. The Hall brings you down because it forces you to think about what you do? Well, maybe it is what you do that is bringing you down. What is some bullshhh? The Hall? Your life? Or what you did?

zero, nothing

Being incarcerated hasn't done nothing for me. My first time coming to the Hall I told my self I was gon' get motivated and get my life together. But as far as now this ain't nothing to me.

They think by sending us to placements, camp, YA, gon' help us but it only makes us more eager to bounce back and mess wit it even tougher. I don't feel like the Hall has helped me in any way. It just isolated me from my loved ones, but I'm still gon' be Bt and I'm still gon' do what I do until I'm ready to make a change. So, whether or not I'm in here or on the outs, I'm gon' do me!

-Bt

From The Beat: Bt, you can do you, no problem! But who are you? We think you are a smart girl, tough, sensitive, silly, plus much, much more. Which part of your personality do you choose to follow? Use your smarts. Incarceration hasn't done nothing for you? Maybe it should help you with your decisions. You wanna be in the Hall or on the outs? You know what you're getting yourself into, when you make the decisions you make. Come on now! You smarter than that. Make decisions that will lead your life in the direction you want it to go.

"Built Or Broken"

make or break

I feel worse. I hate being in this place and when I get out I'm gone make sure I don't never come back.

Yeah, I feel angrier because somebody telling you when to eat, shhh, shower and sleep. What kind of shhh is that. Only thing in this place that help is, that I gives you time to think about what you did and don't do it again.

-Arturo

From The Beat: That's good right? If the Hall was fun, well, it wouldn't be so bad. You probably wouldn't learn, that what you did was wrong. Unfortunately that's how punishment works. But, at least you had time to think about what you did. Don't be angry; just take this as a learning experience.

i'm strong

Who can I blame for what went wrong
When I was weak it made me strong
King of the world, who wanta step on my throne?
Don't hesitate to jump

'cause I'll be quick to jump on yo' dome
Leavin' yo body shakin' while you coughin' up foam
The system, the staff, POs need to leave me alone
Can a brother get a straight release home
I'm like Maya Angelo, everybody wanta read my poem
But what about my long ride home

Not the home in the streets but the heaven above
I can't wait till I get to the Kingdom of thugs
The system leavin' ninjas with stitches
Make J-Cat ninjas turn religious
Smokin' on purple not bam
How the band gone make a plan

They TV gangstas in the makin', man

Please don't tell me it was the liquor is why you ran

-Ham-Bone

From The Beat: How do you imagine that Kingdom of thugs? You know HB, there's one thing about TV gangsters — they never die or get hurt, even when they're shot, and they make more money than all of us. So maybe it's time to put away the "real" gangster game — the one that led you here and that has even more sophisticated slave quarters for you down the road — and live a life that doesn't require you to threaten others or to boast about your life from behind four walls...

What I'm Thinking

I'm in Juvenile Hall stressing, hoping I have another chance. Being in here is not helping me at all; it's bringing me down more.

I am stressed when I'm not here, and now it just made it worse for me. But I'm gonna stay up, still hoping and wishing. I never thought I was going to come back here again, that's the last thing on my mind.

I feel like I have nothing to live for, being in here is just making me think. And I think a person can only think so much. I feel like that's enough punishment, especially when they boss us around. I miss being at home and going to my school. I also miss everybody that I love that's having fun without me right now, but it's all good I'm gonna make it through this.

-Cathelyn

From The Beat: You shouldn't feel like you have nothing to live for, you have a home, people you love and people that love you. Those are some of the best reasons to live. Ok, you're in the Hall and you're forced to think. Good. What are you thinking about? Try focusing on the positive things in your life, it will probably help you with your stress. You'll make it through this. Start creating a release plan for yourself!

The system, the staff, POs need to leave me alone

dangerous in the game

it's dangerous when you're in the game
especially when you got the fame
of a ghetto superstar
drivin' fast and clean fine cars
because the next man
will always want your spot
even if you is hella hot
(meaning five-oh is lightweight on you)
and the one that wants it bad enough
will make your clock stop
even if it's your best friend
just remember in the game
everyone dies in the end

-Lil' Tay

From The Beat: So the youngster on the spot risks his life every day and for what? A little bit of pay, then a stay in the Hall, then the Y, then the jail or the prison yard. Why take it that far?

"It's Dangerous When. . ."

testing folks is dangerous

it's dangerous when people try to test you
the police can't protect you
i hope you've got you're rest too
'cause flying metal will detect you
it might just straight defect you
so just protect your neck foo'
most ninjas out to get you
so duck and hide and if you try to test dude
the same rule goes for me as goes for you

-Tydialmighty

From The Beat: Pointless to test, just to impress some fool who knows less than the real; but just as pointless to stress when a fool tests you — 'cause who need the consequences, you feel!

Danger!

it's dangerous growin' up
in the streets of oakland
cats keep gettin' killed
like every other day
the other day i heard
that my patna jacari got smoked
but come to find out
it wasn't him just somebody
with his identification
well that's all
i'm not feelin' it today
just wanted to clear that up

-Lacey

From The Beat: There's a message there for your friend Jacari as well as for you — get out that life while there's life still in you.

When I'm Mad

it's dangerous when i'm mad
and i go for a ride
and slip behind enemy lines
in a toyota van
and i'm fed up with everything
but i say to everyone
stay off them drugs
and stay on yo' toes
'cause a crackhead don't know
a enemy from a friend
'cause he got an enemy within
what's up to all
a'ight then

-Rocket

From The Beat: You are a danger to yourself and everyone else if you continue to think and act as you do. You don't do drugs, and that's cool — but that war mentality will limit your reality to a box, six feet deep behind concrete or straight under underground.

dangerous on the block

it's dangerous to be on the block
get hit in the head with a clock
it's dangerous when them boys get hot
and start to fire at you on the spot
it's dangerous when you in that beef
them boys busting them chops before they think
it's dangerous when you on the block
posted all night selling them rocks
it's dangerous when you a ninja like me
on the corner rolling up trees
it's dangerous when them boys jump out
saying give 'em everything
while they putting they gun in yo' mouth

-Darryl

From The Beat: So why do you need to be on the block, where every other hot boy carries a Glock? Whether you roll trees or not, get yourself off the spot before you're the next to get clocked. Look, you already got yourself caught up!

it's dangerous

when you come
to my turf
'cause we
put it down for
what it's worth
walking around
my part of town
it's dangerous
all around

-Charé

From The Beat: Dangerous for you and all your crew, too; 'cause violence always comes back to you!

"It's Dangerous When. . ."

It's Dangerous When...

You try to inflict bodily harm to yourself and others as a result of taking mind or body altering drugs.

-Ashton

From The Beat: Yup, that's dangerous. Do you speak from experience? Would you say that drugs are dangerous? Why do you think drugs bring out this side of people?

ANYTHING CAN be dangerous

It's dangerous when you walk into somebody else's turf with red or blue. Shhh, it's dangerous when you're hustlin'. The life us Juvenile Hall detainees live is dangerous, but when you're broke, you gotta do what you gotta do. If you're hungry, you better rob somebody or get some quick cash.

Skateboarding, dirt-biking, roller-blading, people say that's dangerous, too. Those people ain't gettin' arrested. Huh, it's funny. Those are predominantly white people's activities.

-Big Samoa

From The Beat: If you think that skateboarding and dirt biking are predominantly white people's activities, then what are primarily black people's activities? What about jobs? Whose activity is that?

What Is Dangerous

It's dangerous when I can't be with my family or when I am mad at the world. 'Cause I went all over shhh, threw a bad trip down, running from camp to having babies.

The worst thing is I am dangerous when I am on some alcohol walking down the street, knocking out people like a cold-hearted person. And I am even dangerous when I am feeling suicidal, 'cause I might take the person standing next to me. But yeah, that's what dangerous is.

-Taze

From The Beat: Who are you dangerous to, yourself? Who suffers the consequences of your decisions? It's dangerous when you don't think about what you do before you do it. It's dangerous when you act impulsively, but most of all it's dangerous.

Dangerous On This Street

it's dangerous if you are not from this hood and you are walking down this street
 it's dangerous because this 'hood is beefing with that 'hood and you might be from that 'hood they're beefing with
 so you might be in danger of getting killed or shot at if you walk down the street in this 'hood and even if you are from this 'hood you might walk down the block going to a friend's house and the people this 'hood beefing with come by and you will be in the way of a drive-by and you might get shot and killed in the street 'cause it's dangerous if you are from this 'hood
 it's dangerous if you are not from this 'hood
 it's dangerous if you are walking down this street

-Lil' Vick

From The Beat: Basically you're saying that your 'hood has become a war zone, not just for the "soldiers" who claim to be all about respect but for any man, woman or child, walking down the street because they might be next to get shot! Help us out here: what is there to respect in a drug war/ family feud, that could make anyone walking down the street its next fatality?

Dangerous

It's dangerous when...

I'm kicking it with the homies

When I'm always drinking forties

When I'm posted con mi barrio (with the homies in the hood)
 Cuando enemies los tumbo diario (we knockdown our rivals daily)

It's dangerous when...

I'm always doing a crime

When I'm stressing, doing time

When I'm stuck inside this cell

When you got no one in heaven or hell

It's dangerous when...

When I have so much pain

When I feel like going insane

Pero lo pueblo controlar (But, I am able to control it)

Y lo voy a superar (And I'm going to overcome the feeling)

-Onerus

From The Beat: When the situation gets dangerous, you need to make a decision how to handle it. But, before the situation gets to that point, you can decide if you want to put yourself in that dangerous position? Right? Kicking it with your homies, drinking forties, committing crimes. You know that you are putting yourself into dangerous situations. Is that how you choose to live your life? Is there another way? Do you want your family/friends to live in this life of danger? What about your life? Where do you see yourself in the future? Where do you want to be? Your decisions today will determine where you will be tomorrow.

A Gust of Wind

it's dangerous when
 your head and heart
 is filled wit' sin
 i said yeah

it's dangerous when
 you always drank
 and you hit your kin
 and you don't care
 what your baby mama
 feels within

and don't discriminate
 it don't matter about
 the complexion of your skin
 you shouldn't trip
 but let it roll off your back
 like a gust of wind
 [to be continued]

-Steven

From The Beat: Your rhymes have much to say on dangerous ways versus better days. Can't wait to see next week's contribution!

Dangerous Thinking

it's dangerous when
 someone's packing
 and you're lacking
 it's dangerous when you
 shoot at the police foo'

-Suave

From The Beat: Packing won't protect you from a bullet in the neck, foo'. Better to have no gun, busting slugs at no one.

colors Are dangerous

It's dangerous when you wear the wrong color in the 'hood where I'm from. We jump everybody that we don't know, or if you walk down the main at night. But that's why I'm here in the Hall.

-Fernando

From The Beat: It's not just dangerous for the one you guys jump, it's dangerous for you, too — look how many of you are locked up for tripping off colors like foo's! It ain't even coo'.

danger

It's dangerous when you walk up to somebody you don't know and start talking shhh to them, thinking you hard. It's dangerous when you be outside late at night.

-Some Guy

From The Beat: Yupp, that's dangerous. Do you ever do any of these things? Why or why not?

Oakland Streets Are Dangerous

It's dangerous when you live in the streets of Oakland. The murder rate is rising every year. This black on black murder is crazy. It's getting to the point where people are scared to come out of their houses. How could we solve this problem?

To be continued...

-Young Sam

From The Beat: This is a good start of an insightful piece. Why do you think that there is so much black on black violence? How are you playing your part in making sure that you are not engaging in any part of this? We're looking forward to part 2.

it's dangerous when you drink and then you drive

Everything Is Dangerous

it's dangerous when you don't
 look both ways when
 you're crossing a street
 it's dangerous when you play
 tackle football with no pads
 it's dangerous when you run
 with a sharp object in your hand
 it's dangerous when you take
 too many drugs at one time
 it's dangerous when you
 drink and then you drive
 everything is dangerous
 somehow
 in some way
 so be on the look out
 peace

-Peanut

From The Beat: You were writing such thoughtful pieces. It's dangerous when you start thinking everything is equal that you choose to do, because how can you exercise good judgment if you're thinking everything is everything. You'll be acting like a foo' and thinking you're doing coo'.

what's dangerous?

I don't know when it's dangerous except I be thinking like what if this place caught on fire or something. The staff got keys to all the doors, what if they just left us in this place?

-Arturo

From The Beat: Interesting, that could be dangerous. What if a giant three-headed dragon attacks all of Alameda County and shooting it with bullets only makes it stronger? That's pretty dangerous too.

"It's Dangerous When. . ."

Some Feast, Some Die

It's dangerous when them thugs be out there on the streets, nowhere to go. So the streets become the place where they do they thang and try to eat. That's why it gets so hectic on the streets.

It becomes home. That's why they rep that block on the street, loading up guns to protect the precious street. It's chopper city right now in San Francisco all over some old and new beef.

The smart ones are in the house stackin' while they got soldiers out there eating a feast on the streets while the others are blind and getting killed for a street.

-JD B5

From The Beat: What do you think about "the smart ones" who don't seem to care that other (younger) peeps are paying the price for their feast? What is going on in their homes that they have to make the streets their home? Is there anything you can think of to change this situation?

it's dangerous where i live

It's dangerous on my block right now, 'cause ninjas think they sick, so my ninjas have to do something about it. And you know, ninjas, like they have to come back with they shhh, so we have to watch our backs when we on my block of have the heat. We don't know when a ninja gon' come, so we have to be with it or not.

My ninjas stay up. RIP Reem, Fred, Ming Lee, Joe Cheez, Hit.

-J-Stub B2

From The Beat: It's a cycle that seems like it has no end, J-Stub, and where no one wins. We really hope you can stay out of town and out of the mix.

You Never Know

It's dangerous when I leave the block because I'm in beef and some ninjas want my head, and if they see me, they will pop me. You never know, they might be slippin'.

-Young Keezy B2

From The Beat: What if you left the block for good? Can you imagine a life without beef, a life where you can go wherever you want without watching your back?

It's Dangerous When...

It's dangerous when you have to wake up every day and have to put da bulletproof vest "Level 3" on, and make sure you do not leave the spot without the cannon 'cause if you get caught slippin', it's a need to bust back.

I don't like havin' been in a dangerous situation. I really remember when I went to pick up my girl from da Bart station, and I seen my enemy. He bust at me before I bust at him, and when I ran, I got hit in my ankle and I fell. I was in a dangerous situation because he was goin' to run up on me.

My girl started runnin' toward dude screaming. I guess he got nervous 'cause he broke like he was runnin' da 200 meter. So I just say I was blessed to still get out of that.

Another example is like getting into shoot-outs, like when I was with my cousin and some peoples shot up the car. I got grazed in my head, so I don't know how many near-death experiences that I done been in. I just don't say I'm lucky, I say I'm blessed.

I'm a ride it out to the fullest. I'm out. Be easy!

-Cudabeez B5

From The Beat: You describe some very scary situations here, Cudabeez, so we wonder why you haven't decided just to put this life behind you. If you say you're "blessed," then where does this blessing come from? If it is God's blessing, do you think God expects something in return from you? What? If it is luck, how long do you think it will hold out before you crap out? Besides luck, fate or blessings, what responsibility do you have for getting into life-threatening situations?

Dangerous

It's dangerous on them streets if you ain't used to holding yo' heat. It's dangerous when you hang around a ninja that ain't no banga.

You know something else that's dangerous is these females, because these females is setting brothas up.

-Bear Weezy B2

From The Beat: Sounds bad. Who are "these females"? Not all females are like that.

It's dangerous when you're locked up, period

Caught

It's dangerous when you ain't got your piece and you get caught slippin'

It's dangerous when you locked up and your girl's in the outs with some other dude

It's dangerous when you're locked up, period . . .

-Dak Mani B2

From The Beat: We're sure most Beat readers will agree with you. What can you do to avoid the danger of incarceration?

Dangerous Streets

It's dangerous when you hang out on the streets all night because anything can happen to you. These streets are definitely not the code. Drugs can get you in trouble out there, and that will bring you back to Juvy.

-Antoinette GU

From The Beat: We agree with all you say. How can you get yourself off the streets, away from drugs, and out of Juvy?

When you're on the streets

It's dangerous when you on da streets, doin' nothin' but robbin', assaultin', and hurtin' people.

Me, I used to do all that shhh, that's why now I'm in here doin' time, because of some dumb shhh. But now you thinkin' about what you did. You thinkin' that you never shoulda did it. But then my sister wrote to me my homie got killed last week. I coulda been there and she said that somebody tried to shoot her, so the streets right now is too dangerous.

I'm glad I'm in here away from the drama on the streets. But that's all I got to say and RIP Ming Lee, Joe Cheese, Reem, Fred-Fred, and Lil' Chuck.

Lil' Kiki GU

From The Beat: The streets, unfortunately, stay dangerous. We hope you'll find the strength to stay out of them.

Guns Are Dangerous

It's dangerous when people play with guns, but it's worse when you have one and don't know how to use one, 'cause it could accidentally go off and kill the wrong person. Like if you were trying to unload it or cock it back again to get an extra bullet out and it goes off and hits your sister or a close friend. So it's dangerous when guns get into the wrong hands 'cause some stuff happens so quickly.

-Lil P-Hop B2

From The Beat: You are so right about guns being dangerous. The one thing we wonder about is in whose hands guns aren't dangerous. Some people would say it's okay for the police to have them but not criminals. Or some folks may say it's okay for them to have them but not their enemies. Do you think the world could be safer if no one had guns?

It's All Dangerous

It's dangerous when gun fire going off. It's dangerous when people have arguments.

It's dangerous when people fight.

It's dangerous when it's war on the streets.

It's dangerous when people get they lives took.

It's dangerous out on the streets.

It's dangerous selling drugs.

(It's dangerous)

-Young Lloyd B1

From The Beat: It sounds like most of what goes on in your life is dangerous. Are the times when you don't feel danger? When? What could be done to make life safer? Like Mac One O' said: "It's so, so serious."

it's dangerous

It's dangerous when you know someone is going to do something bad and you know it is wrong, then you should go home.

You could be working and the cops can stop you just because you are a black male or you look like you did something. You should not rob anyone, or stab anyone.

-Sean B1

From The Beat: Why do you think we sometimes keep quiet even when we know we should speak up, like when someone we know is about to do something bad? Why are we afraid to "be different" or stand up to others? We hope that you take your own advice, and stay free next time.



"A Bad Trip"

A Bad Trip: Ecstasy

I have never been on a bad ecstasy trip, but I know this cat that took one — and never came back!

I've been known to take two, three or maybe even four a day. I think it all depends on your tolerance level, you know. Blue dolphins, green clovers, white stars, red devils, they all contain their own mixture of different drugs; but they all make you feel basically the same.

I would never recommend a stunna to no one! Because I was turned out, and I ain't stopped yet — damn near addictive!

-Tydiallmighty

From The Beat: You're clearly not ready to admit you're addicted, though you say you were "turned out, and ... ain't stopped yet." Okay, but have you thought of long-term damage? They say it lowers your serotonin level permanently, making you prone to extended depression. What about your decision-making abilities when you're high? Ever do anything foolish? Dangerous?

A bad trip

On about March 25, 2004, I had just came from outside. I was gonna go back outside, but my big brother said he was not going to let me go past, so I got mad stayed in the house.

When my anger calmed down, I told my brother to get me some baggies. He brought them back. I did my thang then went to sleep.

My brother said my momma had took my stuff and she was at work, so I flashed. But my momma flashed even harder because I had left my smacker on the couch and I thank God to this day for not letting my little brother grab that gun.

I just want to say sorry to my momma for everything I put her through, and thanks for being there for me. Thanks, Beat, for letting me express myself. Until next time, peace.

-Lil' Jay

From The Beat: This situation sounds like it could have ended much worse than it did, so we hope you take it as a warning. When you apologize to your mom for putting her through all that you have, does that mean that from now on you won't be putting her through it? What do you think would be the best gift you could give your mom? We think it's you, yourself — to be there with her, to help her, to stay out of the system. Is that a gift you are prepared to give?

one of the worst

One of the worst trips on drugs that I've had, was when I was twelve years old. It was when I tried heroin for the first and only time.

I was cool for about forty-five minutes it seemed, but when I went to Walgreens — I started trippin' out! I got the spins and threw up everywhere, and it felt like I threw up my guts. I would never shoot up, but I did sniff it. And I'm sorry I did.

-Steven

From The Beat: We're glad you take your experience as a warning, 'cause after you've done heroin for a while, that's what it feels when you try to stop — only far worse for far longer.

A Bad Ecstasy-Pill Trip

One time I seen this kid off of an ecstasy pill, and he did not know what to do with himself.

He was around fourteen, fifteen or sixteen, and he was so high he was walking around talking to everyone in sight about anything that came into his mind. Then he started thinking about his little homie in the Hall, and he started crying and could not control it!

It don't make any sense to be that high off anything.

-Darryl

From The Beat: And if he could learn from the pain he was feeling for his little homie, he'd get out the game after he quit those pills that made him feel insane and act all funny.

A Trip To The Hall

My worst trip was not too long ago when I was kickin' it with the homeboys at the overpass. My homeboys had some bud and I had money to go buy some Swishers. After that we smoked hella blunts, I don't remember how many, I was too messed up.

After that we were gonna go to school, but then we saw our homie Juan. He had two fifths of Red Rum. We all were messed up. Well I know I was. I couldn't walk. So we went back to the overpass. Then, 10 minutes after that, Juan saw a homeboy with a car and he said he will be back in fifteen minutes, so we posted at the overpass smoking stogies off the hook 'cause when you're drunk, you need something to smoke off.

So we were kickin' it. Then he came back with two fifths of E&J. We were all messed up. We were looking at each other laughin' hella hard. Then one of the homeboys said he wanted a CD player. We saw this one fool with a flower and a teddy bear. Then one of the homegirls that was with us wanted it, so I snatched the flower and the other homeboy took the teddy bear. Then the other homeboy hit 'em. Then they left when we took the things.

My homeboy was like, "Damn! I wanted the CD player." Right when he said that this one foo' came with a CD player and some loop. We all laughed when we saw him. My homeboys went up to dude, fired on him, and took his stuff.

I didn't do shhh. I was like, "Whoa," but I was drunk, hella high and on stuck mode. After that, everyone said, "Let's go a different way," so we did. I went with Juan and the rest went a different way. We were walking down the street when we saw like three or four cop cars. So we were like, "What the hell (WTH)!"

So we ran in the back of a house that we jumped to, then after that the cops came and busted us. That was the first time I went to jail when I was on something that was one of my bad trips. Since then I don't drink that much any more, and I don't smoke that much 'cause I'm on probation and my girl don't like it

-Lil' Chris

From The Beat: Of course, we're glad you've stopped drinking (almost) and stopped smoking (almost), but we have to ask about one other pattern of behavior you wrote about, and that's stealing what you want. How are we supposed to feel when we read that you and your homies (more than one) spot one person walking alone, you label him a fool, and then you take what he has? However we're supposed to feel, what we actually feel is that you and your homies acted like cowards and bullies, and that if there were any fools around, it wasn't your victims... What do you think?

My Baddest High

My baddest high was when I took a e-pill which was ecstasy, and I drank a pint of Bacardi Superior and a fifth of Bacardi Gold.

It was the worst high I ever had in my life. I felt outside my body. I couldn't even walk. Every time I tried to get up, my body just wouldn't let me. I tried to ask my patnas for help, but I was afraid to — because I thought they'd think I was a pooh-butt.

-DeMarié

From The Beat: So often the worst highs seem to result from a mixture of alcohol plus whatever. You drank enough for acute alcohol toxicity. Next time speak up, 'cause it could kill you.

the one bad trip

The one bad trip I've ever had is coming to Juvenile Hall because this is the one place I never thought I would be. Now here I am, stuck behind these walls, not knowing how long I have to do.

At first I didn't think my case was that serious until I got here and all the staff were looking at me like I'm an animal. I'm like, "Damn, I'm really a good person," and they're like, "Yeah, sure," because all they see is the charges on the paper in front them.

When I first got here, I was okay. I was like, "I'll be going home in a few days." All the staff in intake are like, "You are going to be in here for a while," and I'm like, "Yeah, sure."

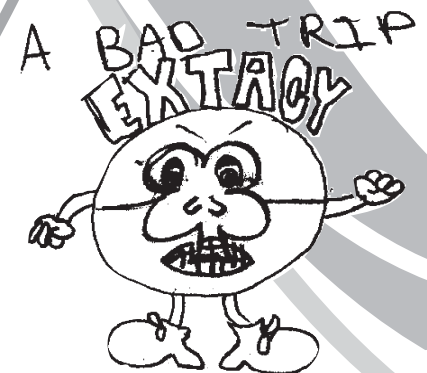
Now here I am, four months later. After the first month that went by, I finally realized how serious my case really is, even though I didn't mean to do what I did. I still to this day don't think it was completely my fault.

I went to court on June 3rd and now this court stuff is finally going somewhere. I just found out my max is seven years ten months. Now I have to go back on June 17th to find out how long I have to do and where I have to do it. I really pray that I don't get sent to CYA. I really hope they give me another chance and send me to camp or at least a group home.

Well it's about that time to put this letter to an end. I would like to say, "I Love you Marissa and Gabriella." Well, gots to go, Bye.

-Matt

From The Beat: Is this the first time you've been in the Hall? If it is, we can understand why you're asking for another chance. But if you've been here before, it means you've already had other chances. If you did get that chance, what changes would you make in your life to make sure this result never happens again? At the same time, if you don't get that chance and you end up in the Y, we hope you find the positives in that environment, and that you take advantage of whatever education and job training you can get to make your life on the outs better, so that you can stay free!



My Bad Trip

One day I was on the spot with the homies drinkin' and smokin'. After that we were perking off the drink, so we wasn't feeling the weed and we wanted to get more high, so we popped some Ecstasy pills. That's when my bad trip started to happen.

Ecstasy and the drink was a bad mix, so I was getting hella hifey. Me and my homies went to pull some licks. The ecstasy started to kick in and after that I was hallucinating. I was seeing people trying to come after me, but it was really my homie. I tried to escape him, so he grabbed me, took me to the park and I passed out.

I was so drunk I couldn't remember what happened. After that, I never messed with Ecstasy again. So that's my bad trip. This happened several year ago. The end.

-Lil' Augie

From The Beat: We can't tell you how many stories we've read similar to yours except for one detail — very few seem to have the good sense you display by learning from your fearful trip. In other words, you had a bad experience and decided not to repeat it. That seems so logical, so reasonable, so grown up. Good for you! Now, when are you going to give up pulling licks?

MANY BLUNTS to a bad trip

When I got a bad drug trip, was when I was so high that I didn't know what I was doing. I got high like that with four blunts.

My friends and I, was like lighting four blunts in my friend's car. When we got out, I couldn't stand up, and I was falling over the car. It took about five hours for me to start getting myself together.

-Fernando

From The Beat: It's a warning. Marijuana Anonymous claims that weed is the most subtle of addictions because you can "maintain" your habit — and watch all your dreams go up in smoke!

Don't Drink

My worst drug is alcohol because when I drink E&J I get so drunk that when it's time to go in the house, I won't. I would walk to the liquor store to get some more drank and drink until I pass out.

-Sam

From The Beat: What we see here are the beginning stages of alcoholism. Please be careful because even though alcohol may not seem dangerous, it is. Have you ever blacked out before? (Not a good thing) When you're drinking, ask yourself — do you possess it or does it possess you? And, will you take the advice of your title?

thizz come down

i always have bad trips
but i usually get 'em
on my thizz come down
bad trips ain't coo'
but i jus' pop another thizzle
and get on the same level
i was before the bad trip
the other bad trip was

the trip from south fremont police station
to the hall for attempted murder

-Soklok

From The Beat: If you'd broaden your vision, you'd see the bad trip starts with the decision to take that first pill (not the last); and ditto with that trip from the police station. You've got to change your life, or next time it won't turn out this "nice".

beer drinking

On Thursday, I was with my cousin, and we were drinking some beer when a cop came along and busted us. We got in trouble.

He gave us a ticket and took us to jail. Next day I got out though. I went home and started rapping with my cousin. Then we ate some Asian food and went to bed.

I guess I drink because I get bored, but I do get in trouble more when I drink. I do have a problem with drinking, especially when I be with my cousins.

-Christopher

From The Beat: We see some good reasons for you to stop drinking, and no good reasons to continue drinking. Even if your cousins drink, you can hang without drinking, too. Can't you?

My Big Sister's Bad Trip

This is a story about my big sister. One day we was in the house, getting high, and my God-sister gave my big sister a ecstasy pill in her drank.

But my big sister didn't know what was in it. She was okay for a while, but then she flipped out! My God-sister left. But my mother called a ambulance. They took my sister to the hospital, and she drank charcoal and water to make her throw up.

From the day that happened to my big sister till now, she has stopped doing drugs. So, in a way, her bad trip turned out good.

-Lil' Tisha

From The Beat: We hope your God-sister learned a lesson, too — 'cause it's not cute or funny or cool, to give someone a drug they don't know they're taking. But your big sister in the end, definitely made the best out of a bad situation. Props to her.

"A Bad Trip"

Bad Trip At My First Group Home

My bad trip was when I was drunk and high at my first group home. We was so messed up that we ran one night and stole cars for fun.

We was so messed up that we were crashing into stuff, like other cars. We was profiling and going eighteen-dumpy. People seen us and got scared, 'cause they knew we was from the town. Then later that night we got caught. When we ran from the police, I was so gone that I got caught. And when I woke up in the Hall, I was sore from running so much and hitting gates.

I had a hangover and a leftover high, too. It was dangerous as well, because I could have gotten killed in those stolos! But God was looking over me, so I'm happy.

-Charles

From The Beat: Happy to still be alive! That sounds right. You've been given another chance to get through whatever program you get sent to; but more than just getting through it — you've been given a chance to use it. You don't need to blow your mind, you need to change your life.

Bad Trip

I ain't never had no bad trip. I remember I had a bad trip when I got drunk for the first time hella long ago.

Boy, I couldn't even move, I threw up and shhh and the next day I had a bad hang over. Man, I'm telling you, every time I got up and tried to walk, I feel nauseous. I even threw up in my sleep I was so drunk.

-Arturo

From The Beat: Drinking may be fun sometimes, but it has ugly, painful nightmareish consequences. Throwing up in your sleep is not fun. Waking up in it is probably worse. Yuck!

Drunken Monkey

Well, I haven't really had a bad drug trip, but I have witnessed a bad drug trip. The bad drug trip that I witnessed happened about a year ago when I was at a party.

Well, it really wasn't a party because we were just kickin' it, but we were drinkin' some E & J and this one female that looked like a monkey got hella drunk, and she was actin' a fool.

While we were walkin', she tripped over a rock and she fell right on her face. When she got up, her whole face was busted, and ever since that day, every time I saw her, I called her the "Drunken Monkey." I'm out!

-Lil' Carlos

From The Beat: That sounds like a bad alcohol experience. But why add insult to injury by calling her names? Don't you think she feels bad enough already? R.S. "Before trying to fix someone else's house, try looking at your own."

this grapes shrooms powder

one time i was so drunk
i fell asleep everywhere i sat down at
i think i mixed my brown and clear
i was so friggin' sick man
i was throwing up and some mo'
if ya understand

-Dance

From The Beat: As sick as you felt, it was a message telling you — drug-abuse is not cool for you or anyone else!

january 28, 2004

I had a bad experience. I was at the block, and it was my boyfriend's birthday.

It was a store down the block called Food Co. I went to Food Co. and stole four bottles (fifths) of Bacardi Razz. And I had already popped a double-stack ecstasy pill or "blue dolphin." After that, all I remember was drinking all I could take till I passed out.

When I woke up, my boyfriend was nowhere in sight. But then there was this boy I know, named Boo, and he told me that I was on a such and such a corner in Richmond, California, and I had pissed on him when he picked me up.

There I was in his house, and I told him he shouldn't have picked me up if he was worried about me pissing. He's serving twenty-five years to life now.

-Joycee

From The Beat: We hope you've decided to stop drinking yourself into oblivion — 'cause, yeah, we'd agree that you had a bad experience. There are worse though, and you don't even need to go there!

Alcohol is a bad drug

A drug trip that was bad that I witnessed was what alcohol did to a person I know.

That person was not right and he wanted to fight every other person he'd see. And then I had to see this person get his butt whupped, and that's the bad trip I witnessed.

-Craig

From The Beat: Alcohol breaks down your impulse control. Maybe that's part of what "feels good" but it can have you doing plenty that ends up feeling bad — for you and everyone around you.

From the day that happened to my big sister till now, she has stopped doing drugs

Bad Trip: Vodka Plus Acid

My worst drug trip was about six months ago. I was at my friend's house and he was drinking some vodka.

He was hella wasted, so I brought out a hit or two of acid. I went into the bathroom and took my acid. It kicked in hella fast, and I started feeling dizzy. So I went to sit down.

Then I thought I saw a big ol' monster! I got hella scared! My friend and me both got hella scared, and we ran off to hide for like three hours.

-Noah

From The Beat: We all have monsters lurking in our imaginations, hidden fears and distorted memories, that visit us from time to time in our dreams. LSD has us dreaming while we're still wide awake, and our dreams appear in the world around us — at least you hid and did nothing. Worse things can happen, on the real!

"A Bad Trip"

Going Through It

Man, I was using weed, Bacardi, and my broad when I was on a bad trip. Grams had just died, so I was on one.

I used this experience to help me out in my future to stay out of trouble, because I was flashing on people, fighting, taking it out on my girl.

The worst part was I slapped her and we broke up. It was bad. But I'm that ninja, so it's nothing. Be cool. It's Young Cheez. I'm out.

-Young Cheez LC RS

From The Beat: Now we know that isn't how Grams would have wanted you to commemorate her death. Do you still flash on people when things aren't going your way? Do you think it's possible for someone to control their emotions when they are on one?

A Bad Trip

I was smoking weed and hanging on the block. It was a trip, because next thing I know I was in a car flying down a street when the cops came out of nowhere.

-Spoon B4

From The Beat: This sounds like an interesting story, but where's the story? We think you could put in far more details — what you were doing, who you were with, whose car did you get in, where were you going, what happened when the cops stopped you, what did you do afterwards — that would fill in a lot of missing information.

The Worst Trip

The worst trip I did was 'shrooms that got me good. I got some stuff, but my girl she was mad at me 'cause I was on that stuff.

Her mom asked, "What's wrong with you?" I said, "Nothing". So she asked me, "Why are you crying?" I said, "No, I am not, Mom."

She said, "That's the first time you called me Mom." I said, "No, I call you mom most of the time." She said, "No you don't." I do, but when I was in my cell she heard me say I was on the stuff. She said, "I caught you, you're on weed. Tell me the truth. You tell me now, are you on E?"

I said, "Okay, Mom, I'm on E." She asked, "Why are you on that? I said, "I'm sorry, Mom."

-Young Rinn B1

From The Beat: So why are you in the Halls? It is sad to read that with a mom that cares about you that much that you still ended up in the system. What will you change about yourself in the future so that you don't end up in jail again? How will you make what you said to Mom — "I'm sorry" — come true?

Burning And Churning

I never really had a bad trip, but I have had negative moments. Too many mushrooms and golden liquor rest in my stomach. Burning and churning, looking at paint covered hands in warm orange streetlights. Watching my hands flicker like a television show.

I reach in my bag to find a green spray can. There is nothing in my world anymore except my other eyes on the corner looking for heat on wheels.

Strange thoughts occur while I'm bustin' straight letter fills. Wham! I just side busted this other dude's throw, but then it starts talking to me, asking me why I did this. "Why are you still here? Just leave and be done!"

I stood there paralyzed with fear. I left the window wide open.

-Air Man B4

From The Beat: If this doesn't qualify as "a bad trip," what would? Did this experience have any effect on your drug or alcohol use? Have you been with others who have had worse experiences than the one you describe here?

Beat Within

I think that my worst drug trip was when I took the XoXo, which is a pill called tizzle.

Man, I was so out my body one time I thought I was never gone come down. But when I did, I started taking mo' drugs, like sippin' on the Remy, Hennessy, Hypno, Paul Masson, E.J., you name it. Everything but beer. To me that trip felt bad also 'cause it felt like I was a puppet on strings — couldn't walk, run, exercise etc. But it made me feel like my mouthpiece was stronger.

When I was smoking that orange cush, it was a cool trip, but it made me feel like I was in a race with a rabbit and I was the turtle moving hella slow. But the baddest trip I ever experienced was when I was with my Big Bro and he had a purple blunt with some thee-thee in it. So I'm smokin' wit' big bro, and it felt like hella bugs started crawlin' on me, plus I was up fo' five days straight.

So I stopped messing with dat thee-thee, and started poppin' mo' pills. Then I increased the weed smokin'. But through it all, I wish I never started.

-Zoomungus B5

From The Beat: So let's get this straight. You couldn't walk, run or exercise; you were up for five days wiping imaginary bugs off you; so you started poppin more pills and smoking more weed! Why do these sentences sound so disconnected to us? What would it take for you to give up the whole works?

A Near tragedy

Wassup Beat? I just want to say that when I was little I was poppin' pills like it's nothing. But I stopped 'cause when I be on one, I be doin' some ol' other stupid shhh.

I almost shot my little brother 'cause he was messin' with me when I was on one. I pulled out the cannon and pointed it at him. When I told him to be coo', the cannon went off on its own. So when that happened I stopped poppin'.

I first started poppin' pills 'cause my friends told me it was coo'. Even though I don't do that, I just did it 'cause I was tryna act hard and couldn't say no.

So now that I don't do that no more, I be on my shhh which means I be doin coo'. I don't want to pop no more 'cause I don't want to OD myself.

-Jay Baby B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Wow, Jay, that experience of nearly shooting your brother would be enough to put us off drugs forever! We're glad it had that effect on you, too, at least as far as pills are concerned. What happened when that gun went off? Were there other consequences? What else have you changed about your life since then?

One Bad Trip

My bad trip was when I running the streets with no sleep with my heat thizzin' in the streets. My fam showing no love, trying not to with my back in the streets.

Lil' Jimmy B1

From The Beat: Well lil' Jimmy, sometimes we have to learn the hard way. It seems like you've been doing it the hard way, but what have you learned? Maybe it is time to slow down and get up off them streets and into something better?

That Weekend

One of my bad trips was on a weekend with one of my friends, his name was Robert. We got some Bacardi Razz — we drank it, got a little tipsy, then we drank some wine as we took it to my house. We started to mess around, then we started to throw up. I was in the bathroom, my friend was throwing up on my carpet, lying in the it. Then my uncle walked in and started to yell at us, then he kicked us out.

-Don't Mix B2

From The Beat: Nasty. Did you ever mix your alcohol like that again? Hopefully you stopped drinking the poison!

bqd, bqdd trip

I overdosed on crystal meth one time about a year ago. I had been up for like four days. I started shaking and sweating a lot. My eyes rolled in the back of my head, and I was out for two minutes.

I never went to the hospital, but I probably should. I am pretty lucky to be all right after that.

-L B5

From The Beat: Who took care of you when this happened? Do you remember everything, or did you black out? Why didn't you or your homies call the ambulance? If you were with someone who was having a similar experience, would you call for help, or just hope for the best?

I Took A Lot

Man, I took a lot of bad trips, and one of them trips was in this place. And matter of fact, this is the worst trip I had in my life.

I had a trip on pills; it wasn't no dope fiend trip, it was a get money trip. I also went on some good trips, too, I go on some good get money trips.

-Bear Weezy B2

From The Beat: We love that you always write in The Beat program, Bear, and that you're taking your life/future so much more seriously. We hear what you're saying about the Hall being a bad trip, but it seems from our point of view that it's done you some good, too. Can you imagine getting some good money trips without pills?

Devil Dast

Yeah, I had a bad trip. I was on crack. Man, I miss that feeling, I was just chillin'.

But one time I had some bad crack. This ninja sold me some soup mixed with crack. I did not feel high, I felt lower than shhh. I started to see zebras and lions. That's when I knew it was not crack but Angel Dust.

See, it was already in a blunt so I did not know what I was really smoking in the first place. I know I took a mushroom before I started. This lion was getting close so I ran. I ran all the way down the street.

-DoDo B5

From The Beat: Did this scare you — enough to give up or cut back on your drug use? Do you miss crack so much that you plan to use it again when you get out of here? What is it about being high on crack that you like? What can you do when you're high that you can't do when you're straight? How did your frightening experience of thinking you were being chased by a lion end?

Trippin' Bad

I had a bad trip on ecstasy one time. I think I popped a blue dolphin. Well, I popped the pill, and about half an hour later I was startin' to feel it kick in. Then one minute I coo', the next minute I

was trippin' about everything around me.

I went to the store and got a pack of Newports 100's and a big bottle of Fiji water. I was smokin' these 'ports one after another. Then my eyes started to tweak and they couldn't stay in one place. I started to feel all sick and shhh.

And then I yacked out all the water I drank, and I felt like I was swallowing my tongue. And then I yacked some more. I went into my bathroom and took a cold shower to bring down the heat of my body. I felt coo' afterwards, but I was still a lil' tripped out. That didn't stop me from poppin' pills.

-Juicy-Loo B5

From The Beat: If this didn't stop you from poppin those Es, what would?

Back In This Place

What's up Beat Within! This me, Chucky again, being up in here. When I finish with all this garbage, I am going to go back to the 'hood and do it live all the time!

I am here for a warrant, and they did me scandalous. They gave me eight months! I've been here for two months already. It's nothing though, 'cause there are homeboys doing ten or twenty-five to life! And they won't get out for a while.

I will be back on the block in the 'hood soon. Well, anyway, to everyone up at Camp, I will be there soon. Stay up and do your program. And to those in max and in CYA, keep your head up.

-Chucky

From The Beat: You say eight months is nothing 'cause there are some doing twenty-five to life; but if you don't see your time as a warning to get your life right — that will be you in max or the Y or the state pen' and it's not worth it in the end!

Davon's Rap

man they got me up here
for some crazy ol' crap
now they talking about a crash
man but I didn't even bap
why these j-cats trying to give me dap

-Lil' D

From The Beat: Forget your case for a minute. Focus on the game you play and why you're up in it. Keep playing and you'll catch case after case. Do you feel what we're saying? — Change!

No cLLs

what's up homes my name is tei
for all the girls i'll blow ya mind
like all the time

if you just give me a call
'cause you look fine all of y'all
i see you eatin' in here
gettin' fat off this county food

what else is there to do
beside being bored locked in a room
wish i could call you on the phone
but i'm here in my room all alone

-Tei

From The Beat: If you choose to feed your mind and not just your belly, you'll stay out free to use your celly after school and weekends, too. Or, play like a bad boy and stay the system's toy.

Good Bye

I'm leavin'. I hope I don't come back. I have two more days and I'll be out of here.

I can't wait to see cars, trees, dogs, cats, everything that I haven't seen in a long time. I have my summer. People were telling me that I was going to YA. Look at me now. I'm going to a group home, and where are they going? Who cares? All I know is I don't.

I don't have to hear anybody get into my shhh when I'm not talking to them. Ninjas acted like cant nobody see them. Man, I'm happy I'm leaving. These ninjas in here think they run everything. They act like they hella hard.

But I'm not worried about it. I'm leaving and they're still going to be in here. I don't feel sorry for them. Shhh, these ninjas in here don't even like me.

-D-Moe

From The Beat: We're hella happy for you, but we aren't happy for the ones left behind. How are you going to handle yourself at the group home? And what about afterwards? What are your plans for not returning to this fine resort? We know you must have a plan to set your feet down on the right path — after you see cars, trees, dogs, cats and everything. Good luck!

There's No Love Like Tough Love

My name is Vincent. I'm only fourteen years old. I was born in San Francisco, CA, USA. But most of my life, I was living in Oakland. My mom has four kids, and I'm the second to the oldest.

I dropped out of the eighth grade and started hanging out. When I used to hang on the block, all I used to do was get hyphee and Roc white T-shirts and Rocawear jeans and Jordan's Nikes. Now I'm in Alameda County Juvenile Hall fighting a gun case — but the gun wasn't mine! I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Now I'm in the youngster's unit here doing my time. Most of the staff is really cool. There is this one staff, named Ms. Lowe, and I like her a lot, 'cause she reminds me of my mother a lot. Some kids give her a hard time and call her all kinds of names and say she's mean.

She is just showing them love! Everyone has a different way to show someone how they love them. Hey, like Ms. Lowe told me, "There's no love like tough love!" If it was up to me, I would like to have Ms. Lowe as my godmother.

-Lil' D-Baby

From The Beat: Props to Ms. Lowe and props to you for recognizing the tough love she has for you when you're ready to receive it — and since you're in here, you know you need it! And you need to know this: there is no right time to be in the wrong place! You didn't need to be there at all. And if that's where you make the money for your fit — now you know, it is not worth it!

The Beat's Slappin'

What's up Beat? This is little Gato from Hayward life, just wanting to say what's up to all the homeboys out there. I also want to say what's up to all them talented flickas that be writing in The Beat. Keep writing. You are very talented.

I'm just sitting in this East Bay Alameda County. I want to say thanks to Dave for comin' through and getting me outta my cell.

So I'm a bounce now, but to al the homeboys, keep putting it down. And for the females, stay beautiful because regardless what you're told, God made you beautiful in your own way.

-Lil' Gato

From The Beat: God also made you beautiful in your own way, and in His own way. What do you think it means to God to live a beautiful life? Do you?

Now that I got sentenced and had time to think, it's nobody's fault for me going to CYA.

To CYA

Hey Beat Within, this the homie Twin form them streets. I just wanted to tell you guys where I'm going. But first I want to start by giving my utmost respect to everybody.

Well, I went to court on the 3rd and the judge told me that I'm too old to go to another group home and that he can't send me to Santa Rita. Then he told me the only place I can go is to CYA.

At the time, I felt like punching my public defender in the face, but I had to hold myself. Now that I got sentenced and had time to think, it's nobody's fault for me going to CYA. it's all mine.

Well, I just want to say don't go through the same shhh I went through. If you get sent to a group home, pimp it and don't run. Be safe and stay up and never let no one get you down. I'm out.

-Twin

From The Beat: Well, we're really sorry you're going to the Y because we think there are much better programs designed to make you a better person, not a worse one. So now it's in your hands to make the most out of a bad situation. The fact that you resisted your impulse to smack your PD tells us that you are able to control yourself when you have to, a sign of maturity. Just keep that control going, and you should be able to handle your business and get through it.

Leondre's Rap

my name leondre
i'm a fourteen-year-old male
that was born in oakland c a
here in the u s of a
where it get hyfee
roll up trees
straight smoking
driving all down the streets
with the door wide open
it's hyfee
it's too hyfee
we have brothers
killing each other
my mother told me
she was going to get me
out of here one day
but still i wait

-Leondre

From The Beat: It is too hyfee to be smoking and riding and still be safe and free. So when you get home, slow your roll. Get yourself in school and get your life under some self-control.

I Been Stressin'

What's up Beat Within. It's me, Young Chango, and I've been stressin' for these first few days in the Hall.

Now, it's nothing because I did the crime and now I have to do the time. But I hope I get out on the tenth of June. For now I have no choice but to sit in this ditch. We'll all get out soon, but until then — keep your head up and stay up.

-Young Chango

From The Beat: Neither the crime nor the time, is nothing. To make something of yourself, you'll need to stop doing both.

i wqnnq know

I wanna know why they be hating on me.

Is it because of my looks

or is it because I count more money

than in the pages of this book?

Or is it because where I'm from

or because of what I do?

But I think it's 'cause I be the first one wit' the new shoes.

Ha, ha, ha. Can't be that,

Do you think it's because they want to test me?

Or is it because I was born to stack?

What you think?

That sometimes it just be like that,

Shhh, not in my 'hood.

We get hated on every day

even if we play like it's all good.

Ninjas come thru and it's their foolishness

we don't respect,

so we start getting rude and shhh.

But, if I was not how I am

I would have been dead.

That's just how it is.

I've been shot four times.

Why? I wanna know why

they still be hating on me.

They already killed my bra bras,

Critty Bo, Lil' JJ, and A-N-T.

I just want to tell them what's up.

But right now I'm about to be up out.

I gave you something to think about,

Last but not least, Lil' B-Bo RIP.

-Lil' Dada

From The Beat: Who's "they?" And how must you live your life to stay alive? You write as if you are untouchable, yet you know from the loss of your bra bras you are not. What is the hating about? Is it only directed at you, or do you hate on someone too? Is there a way out of this game where those at the bottom keep the beef alive, killing each other off and doing the work of those at the top?

My Life

What's Beat Within? This is the homie Twin from them Hayward streets. Today I'm going to talk a little bit about my life. Well, here it goes.

I was born in Oakland and raised in Hayward, but before we lived in Hayward we lived in Alameda till I was about seven years old. When we moved to Hayward we started school right away and that's where I met my best friend and homeboy "Dre".

Back then my twin didn't get along with my patna so they got into it a couple of times. We used to be hella bad. We used to beat on other kids in school and talk shhh to girls. I started smoking weed when I was about eight years old. I remember getting in trouble with the principal for smoking and having weed on us, so me and my bro and my best friend Dre got sent to some meeting at school and got into hella trouble.

I used to go to school with hella bad ass kids, and when I went to school, that's where I met my girl friend and best friend at, but she didn't go out with me at the time. She used to go out with one of my old friends named Chon. I remember we used to make that boy do hella stuff if he wanted to hang out with us. He had to be like us and so he did.

After a while we started to hang out with other people, and when I was about eight or nine, I started to gangbang. So when we went to school, we started beating up on kids thinking they were from another gang, but as we got bigger we started fighting with the real gangsters.

When I was about eleven, I started to rob people and steal from stores. I guess this is the life of a gang star. Well, homies and Beat Within, I just wanted to talk a little bit of my life, and to all the homeboys in the hall, camps and the pen, I just want to say be safe, and never let no one get you down for nothing. I'm out.

-Twin

From The Beat: We think you've got skills in telling your story, Twin, but if you're going to title it, "My Life," and you want to describe it as the life of "a gang star," then we wish you would put it all in. For example, it seems to us that a significant part of this "gang star's" life is allowing himself — yourself — to be taken prisoner, to be treated like a slave, to be separated from everything and everyone you love, and to allow the system to make a lot of money off you! If you're going to tell your life, tell it all.

To My Bra-Bra J-J, RIP

What's up? How has it been lookin' from yo' point of view?

Down here it getting ugly! But now, I miss you! I wish I was up there with you sometimes, so save me a place in thug mansion!

But now, Me, DaDa, Dirty-De, and Johnny-G all holding it down ya' know! Don't ask what we in here fo' 'cause you would call it foolishness. But lately I been ridin' down memory lane! I just was telling DaDa, Johnny G, and Dirty-De how you and Stinker jumped me. I owe you one. Oh yeah, I'ma get you sooner or later!

But now, I can't really express myself because I gotta respect the rules of The Beat Within, but until the next time, watch over me Bra-Bra. I know you got my back! I love you!

-Emmy-Boe

From The Beat: Are there any rules for getting into "Thug Heaven"? Is there such a place as thug hell? What determines whether you go "up there" or "down there"? And why do you want to hurry the process of getting there? Life is ridiculously short as it is (the older you get the more that is made clear), so why not just wait a minute. Our belief is that you only get one chance to live, so make the most of it. Spending it in lock ups is not the most of it, it's the least of it!

Growing Up In The Game

Growing up in the game for me was hard for family. They never thought they was gonna raise a young G.

But my granny already knew it was gonna be hard for me. She saw how I was acting up in the streets. She always tried to do what was best for me, but I be like, "OK, Granny, but I love the streets." And then she said, "Don't come back to my house off some weed and asking me for something to eat!"

But I love my granny. She always been there for me, when I was growing up in the streets.

-Lil' Shawn

From The Beat: What does your granny say about you being here? If you followed her advice, where would you be? You say you love your granny, but do your actions prove your love? Words are easy, but what are you going to DO when you are back on the outs to stay there?

Something that i regret

I regret putting my mom through all this stress. I wish she didn't have to come to all these court dates, but I'm glad I'm not her age because I would've been in the pen right now if I was.

-Jp

From The Beat: Real talk. What will you do in the future so that you can make your mother smile instead of stress?

pray

Can you feel the pain of burning inside
Sittin behind cell walls thanking God you're alive,

But what for to be incarcerated,
servin' time in the hall till eventually you're emancipated

So all there is to do is pray, day by day
and don't let no one get away,

because a day used is better than wasted
God don't care even if your prayer status basic,

At least you pray and have faith in the lord,
Any problem you have can be better when heard.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: It's too bad we don't know who we're writing to because we'd like to tell you to strengthen that relationship with God you write about, and use it to keep you out of here!

I Hate This Place

in the hall behind these closed walls
wearing the next man's draw's
that he had on yesterday
is not the way i want to live
so i ask the judge to give
me a chance at home
instead of being somewhere far
and alone

-Lil' Tay

From The Beat: What can you ask of yourself, so when you get another chance you're ready to answer the bell?

when i get free...

When I get out, I plan to go to Job Corps. I was going to go before, but I didn't want to live by their rules.

But now after being in here, I know I can follow their rules easily. And when you get out, they give you a couple of "Gees", so that's even better.

-Jp

From The Beat: Job Corps is supposed to be a really good program. They have hella trades that you can study and learn. Which trade is of interest to you, so that you can start earning your own Gees?

Lil' Shawn (S) AND Lil' weeze (W)

S: What's up with it little bra? I heard you holdin' it down at that group home.

W: You know me. I gonna stay keeping it lit. Never thought we would be talking to each other from The Beat.

S: Now you tell me how it is gonna be when you touch down.

W: I ain't gonna get into all that in this Beat. But best believe you gonna hear from me. Anyway, how long they try to keep you off the streets.

S: They try to do me, but I 'm gonna go through it like the waves in the sea, keep it lit for me. I'll see you the streets.

-Lil' Shawn

From The Beat: Well, Lil' Shawn, we can guess from what you don't want to say in The Beat that you're right, we will be hearing from you again. And we'll be seeing you again. Right here. What would you say about someone who does the same thing but expects a different result?

**Don't ask what we in here fo'
'cause you would
call it foolishness.**

I Woke Up Last Night

I woke up last night and shhh wasn't right

I woke up last night and damn near had a fight

I woke up last night and I was still on the scandalous hypes.

I woke up last night and the staff tried to give me the blues.

I woke up last night and said I might as well act a fool.

I woke up last night and said, "Damn! Lil' Day Day still acting a fool.

I woke up last night and Redbone was sleep in his steels.

I woke up last night and Emmy-Boe was standing at my window.

I woke up last night and it was time for rec.

I woke up last night and somebody got phone check.

I woke up last night and said somebody is getting they county treat taken tonight.

I woke up last night and damn, I ain't eatin' right.

I woke up last night and it just didn't feel like me.

I woke up last night and some dude try to catch me off guard.

I woke up last night fell to my knees.

I woke up last night and say to the Lord, "Please."

I woke up last night RIP to Lil' JJ and Greedy.

I woke up last night and said RIP to Critty-Bo and Mikey.

I woke up last night and said RIP to A-N-T and M-A-T.

I woke up last night and said RIP to Tank, KD and Lil' Jem.

And I woke up last night and said, "This shhh is hard."

-Lil' Dirty

From The Beat: Yes, this stuff is very hard, especially that list of RIPs you leave us with. When you see so many of your young homies going out of this world, does it make you want to make any changes in your own life? When you wake up again in your own bed, what do you think you will do differently?

RIP

it ain't worth it
when y'all gone away
if you guys was still here
your family would still be the same
even me
rest in peace
see you when i get there
rest in peace
nuch / lil' pot / pup / young see
(to my brother on lockdown
see you when i get out)

-X

From The Beat: Stop! Before you watch your brother drop — or he has to bury you! Get out the life and back in school.

Sixth Time Here

This is a ninja's sixth time in this ditch, man, on everything! A Ninja start to get tired of this and start trying to think harder than the last time I was here, or the time before that.

This time I thought longer and harder about what I'm a do to not come back to his hellhole. But one I thing I do know: I'll never say never about coming back — because I said that every time I left this place. And look where I'm at, writing in The Beat.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: It's not what you say or don't say as you walk out that door back to the free world, it's what you do or don't do: Go to school, don't go to the spot; get a job, don't sell drugs.

Between Us

i hate it when we fight
because i know deep in my heart
how much we care for one another
it's silly when you think about it
that two people who love each other
should have such a hard time
getting back on the right track
and to get past the hurt and tears
and back to the hugs and kisses
and beyond misunderstanding to forgiveness
i'm more than willing to try
and i hope you are too
because when things are right between us
life couldn't be better

-Rubin

From The Beat: Your love lyrics each week are sweet, but you need to look at what put chains on your feet — she deserves a man that's free. And that's what you need to be.

Bad Day

I had a bad day. It seems like it started off like this. I fell off my bike, and when I got up my bike was flat.

I got up and I saw my friend. My friend told me, "Let's go hit this corner before you go to work." And I said, "Whatever, let's go!" So then he told me, "Hold on, stay right here." The next second he comes back around the corner and tells me, "Hold this."

So I hold it. And we walk two blocks down when I see a police car. It got up next to me, and the police tell me, "What you got right there?" And that's when I realize it was stolen!

I got chased and I got caught. And now I'm in the Hall. That was also the day my mother passed away. And that's why it was a bad day!

-Luis

From The Beat: If that was the day your mother passed away, that was a day beyond bad. We've read so many true stories about people going crazy after the death of a mother or father, and getting locked down for what they do. But that day, it seems like the craziness came to you!

What's Up, Beat

Well, this is Lil' Rich again. And I'm almost out. All I got now is two weeks left. I'm hella happy. They're finally about to let me go home!

I did ninety days in here, and I been ready to leave. When I get out, I'm 'bout to be coo' — and do what I'm supposed to. To all, stay up. I'm out.

-Greedy Rich

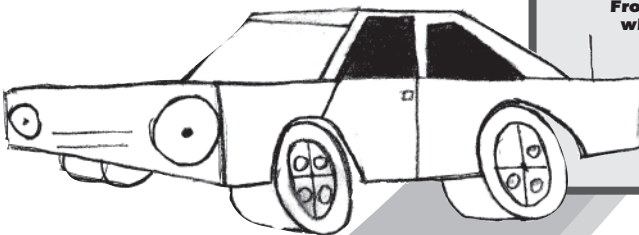
From The Beat: Get greedy about your freedom and make sure the cheese you're seeing isn't bait to lure you back to juvenile prison. And don't go looking for trouble or you'll find it, double.

Drag Life

How did I get started? I don't know. It was something always around me, so I guess I just grew into it.

-Jp

From The Beat: We understand what you're saying because we know that children learn by watching the world around them. It's their "normal" world, so how can they expect not to mimic what they see. Do you see yourself growing out of it?



Hard Head

Come on ninja, you ain't on my level
To me you ain't nothing but a lightweight feather
And now it's 2004 and you just now trying to hit licks
I been doing this since I was around eleven
I never played games with kids because I was all about getting my chedda'
When you was in the house studying books
I was outside running with drug dealers and crooks
And you was scared to come outside because you knew what was happening
You told yo' mommy that it was too much clapping
And I try to listen to my daddy, but the shhh wasn't happening
I was too busy in streets trying to get it crackin'
I went to the Hall but nothing happen
I got out and I was still on that hype
But this time I was staying out all night
And I wasn't listening to OGs or ninjas from the spot
Because the way I was feeling, I was Scarface of the block
And I wasn't going to be stopped by no ninja from no spot
An' if you was disrespecting me I was breaking your spirit
'Cause I was always raised to be a beast
But the OGs told me to slow down because the way I'm going I'm going to be resting in peace
But I wasn't listening because I was trying to run the streets
But if I can go back in time I would listen to the OGs and change my ways
'Cause I'm only 17 and I almost caught to the face
And what I'm really trying to say is
"Being hard-headed really don't pay."

-Lil' Dirty

From the Beat: So now you're the OG trying to tell the youngsters to slow down. Since you didn't listen to that advice when you got it, what makes you think you'll be listened to? Experience tells us that "Do as I say, not as I do" never works. Young people learn by watching, so it is how you live your life that becomes the model, and not what you tell about how to live your life. So, now that you've said what you've said, what are you going to do to make those youngsters see a different you?

Once Again

Well, here I am again in Alameda County Juvenile Hall. I thought I was never going to come back to this messed-up place. But I did! Because I made that choice to jump out of that van that was going to take me to the group home I was supposed to go to.

Then I had a warrant — and my dumb self wanted to rent a telly and get high, just because my home girl was going to rehab! It ended up being all bad, because we both got locked up.

Once again I am saying — I hope I don't come back after I get out! Before I put down the pencil, I would like to say what's up.

One love and I'm out.

-Lil' Spanky

From The Beat: Your shout-outs read like a list of folks who [we left out] [just like you] want to play life as a joke, and then claim to be serious down folk. It just doesn't work like that, unless you want the joke to end up on you once again. It's good to have hope, but it won't help if you choose to act like a dope again and again.

rastafarian me

twist extensions
are to my back like six inches
taking them out is work mon
so i twist them
cats be pissin' me off
like urination
i'm simply what bob marley is
to the jamaicans
the interior of my mouth
is a white gold grill
crushed ice in 'em
so you catch a cold chill
glaciers in the ring
but the band holds more
replace another king
kisses turn to cold sores
watch the cold mink
'cause the fur turns icy
classic woodson jersey
sponsored by nike
i am that button
push it in and try me
turn that thumpin' music on
i get hyphy
i take endorsements
take heed to buy me
no need for invitations
it read "invite me"
i shine you the spectrum
you can't fade this
stompin' air force one's
and classic grey goose k-swiss
haters wanna be a part of me now
wild out goin' dumb
rastafarian style wild

-Troy

From The Beat: Your lyrics deliver style with spirit, and everyone reading this page can hear it. But from where you sit to write poetry, how can we believe your money came legitimately from sponsor endorsements? And don't you know drug money comes with law enforcement? A "rasta mon" got to be free, so think again what rasta means.

Smile

i smile when i'm mad
i smile when i'm sad
i smile when i'm glad
whatever i go through
i remain to
let a smile shine through
it's all up to you
no matter what you
go through
so just smile
for me
every Sunday
i see in church
you look so mad
why
never let them
see sweat
girl keep your head
till you smiled
and your gold ones
bling
man lil' mama
it made my heart
sing
you're beautiful
a queen
so when i see
on sunday
girl smile for me

-Ben

From The Beat: A smile's a gift with which to keep your sanity, unless you let it be simply vanity. It's okay to feel the pain of a hard lesson, if it helps you make a change to claim a blessing. (Love can be good or bad: healthy and happy or sick and sad.)

MY baby

my baby's cute
body soul and mind
different color eyes
you know she's one of a kind
she's the sort of girl
that makes ya head turn
she got dark hair with light skin
and a whole lot of curves

-Rich

From The Beat: Change this word or that, and it reads here like a car ad. Tell us about her soul, her mind — that's what makes her one of a kind!

yesterday

i smoke so much dro'
when i'd talk my mouth smoked
now when i rap
i set fire to the track
close ya trap
unless ya flows is worth listening
females be on my line
when i'm spitting
'cause my mouth be glistening
they christened me t-money fame
i don't know why
i neva try to get recognized
just call me t-money mane

-T-Money

From The Beat: When your rhymes flow hot after you just detoxed, then you know you don't need drug to capture fame — to keep your freedom, flip the script and go legit in a new game!

In God We Trust

Thinking of the day they led me away, not knowing when I will be free again, but one thing that I do know for sure is that nothing can get me down as long as I pray! See, ever since I've been here, I've been reading the Bible, praying everyday for all of us that are locked up.

I pray that we do no more evil and do more good in life because we only live once! And Jesus is the way! See, if God can give his only son for our sins, we can at least do a little good and pray every day. I know that I am a sinner and I confess with my mouth that Jesus died for us, and I know that one day, all will be judged. I ask for forgiveness every day, and I hope you do, too. I pray for us all!

Here's a prayer from me to you: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Your kingdom come, you will be done on Earth as it is in heaven. Forgive us for our sins, heal our sick, strengthen our weak, feed our hungry, and lead us not to temptation, but deliver from us from the evil one. Amen."

-Gypsy George

From The Beat: How has accepting God as a part your life changed you? When did you start embracing religion, and how did it happen? Do you try to follow all of God's teachings or only the ones that are convenient? The Lord's Prayer is very powerful What is your favorite Psalm in the Bible? What does it say to you?

To My Girl

Damn, I'm going to write about what I've been thinkin' about for these whole four months, my girl, Stephanie. I've been in here just thinkin' 'bout her non-stop. I'm tellin' you... I got it bad.

I know she knows that, but the thing is... She says she loves me more than I love her, but she has no idea how much I really care for her. She says she's more than sure of herself that she loves me more, so I guess she does.

She goes to all my court dates, writes me every day, and she always calls my mom to see how I'm doin'. I just want to hurry up and get out so I can show her how much I really love her.

-Lil' Ray

From The Beat: Ladies need time, attention and love. When you are released, do you plan on making her your priority? Will you show her you love her more than you love the game? How can you make her feel secure and loved?

Only You

Thinking of you!
Oh, how I loved you!
I say words can't express how much I loved you,
but here I go:
As many stars as there are up in the sky,
they can't compare to the love I had for you.
If I had a way to show you how much I love you,
I would take you to a beach and say
"See all the grains of sand?"
Well, that is not enough compared to my love for you."

-Gypsy George

From The Beat: What makes you love this person? Who is this person? Your lovely love poem reminds us of a very famous love poem by a woman named Elizabeth Barrett Browning called, "How Do I Love Thee." The first lines go: "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways/I love thee to the depth and breadth and height/

Spicy Mike Life

My life been a living hell, but I love my life. I'm trying to touch millions and I'm going to get it. However and whatever, but, when I do it, I'm going to do it smart.

But don't get it twisted, I know right from wrong. But it's hard in these streets, so what I'm saying is, I'm going to get it how I live. So what I mean nobody can tell me nothing, but me. And I'm going to do whatever I want. So all that lecturing and shhh, I ain't trying to hear it.

I'm just keeping it real, so just remember I know right from wrong and I hold up to mine and I'm eighteen years old, so it's a must I got to get it.

-Spicy Mike

From The Beat: What? What are you keepin' real? If you say that nobody can tell you nothing but yourself, then how are you going to learn anything? All you know is what you know. If you try to hear what people are telling you, you might learn something. Anyone can make mistakes on their own, and then learn from them. That's the hard way. It takes a smart individual to learn from other's mistakes and other's advice. Which kinda person are you?

Haters

look left to right
tryin' to see if they're out of my sight
yet — but they're still there
everything i do and get
has them feeling for it
like it's a drug and they're addicted
here they come let's play
hate on hanna
ready or not
there they come
steady jocking what i wear
and wherever i go it seems
like i need to smile to kill their stare
'cause they can't faze me with that glare
even in here they hate in jail
mugging and rolling their eyes
like it's their job and they get paid
to hate on hanna
they smile in my face
like they really mean something to a gee
fake females trying to steal my shine
and always wanting what's mine
i think haters should be booked
and brought to charges
'cause hating is a crime
and they should have to do some time
i wonder what kind of world it would be
if it was a world that's hater-free
would you think they'd still wanna be like me

-Lil' Mama Hanna

From The Beat: Yeah, hate is a crime against humanity, but don't let it mess with your vanity and have you trading in your sanity to prove how hard you can be and flash in an instant of savagery — 'cause the consequences and misery are not worth your time. Don't even let them take up space in your mind. Let their gestures and words go unseen and unheard, 'cause they're just looking for entertainment when they're bored or full of their own pain they don't know how to cure.

rest in peace, chris

you gone now
and you left me in this world
all alone
our plans all over
no more smoke outs
and no more good yucks
man nights living alone
i wish you were there
it only been about three months
and i also have a lot of love
for you and me to share
when y'all was here
people never really understood
what you went through
rest in peace chris

-Joycee

From The Beat: It sounds like you and Chris shared an intimacy that included understanding each other's pain. It's hard when people you love die, but harder when they die young. RIP Chris.

MY good mood

Today I'm in a good mood, even though I've been locked up for about five months. I ain't trippin' because I only got one more month to serve and that's the reason why I am in a good mood.

When I was on the outs, I had this pretty lil' female that was ready to give her heart to me and ready to make it official, but by me being fresh out, I was ready to get money. I thought that I wasn't going to have time for her, but I didn't know that I was lettin' a good thing pass me by. I made a stupid move and started to play games with her, feel me? But, I know she still has feelings for me and when I "touch-down," I'm going to set things right. But that's only if she's willing to let me, feel me?

But when I saw her today, she brought a smile to my face 'cause when she smiled at me, I could tell it was because she was happy to see me.

-Lil' Molly

From The Beat: We all often make the mistake of letting a good woman or man pass us by. Sometimes we just aren't focused on a relationship at the present moment. There's a saying that goes like this, "Find something you like, set it free, if it comes back, it's meant to be. If it doesn't, c'est la vie." Can you feel that?

Court

What's up Beat? This is Green Eyes writing from my room 'cause these fake staff be hatin' on me, but I ain't trippin'! Feel me? I went to court on June 3rd. It was supposed to be my disposition! So, let me tell you how it went down.

Well, I went into the court room and my public defender asked if I could go back to Camp. The judge was about to let me, but the DA started to hate, talkin' about I got a history of gangbanging, and if I go back, I'll just mess up again. So the judge was like, "We'll have you come back in two weeks," which is on the 17th of June for a progress report on how I am doin' in the unit and stuff!

So, now I just have to wait and see what they're going to do with me! Well, to the homies in Camp and in the Hall with me, stay up, be coo', but represent to the fullest! I am out!

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: If you're "representing to the fullest," was what the DA told the judge right? How should the judge judge you? Your actions today will affect your tomorrow, so what are you doing so that you get yourself a good progress report? How can you make it so that you don't end up in CYA or the pen? Don't go that route. It ain't cool.

My Life

I have a mind with a lot of stress.

A body that don't get a lot of rest.

Coming from sitting on a set.

If I don't eat right, I lose a lot of weight,

Skin gets skinny and pale.

Feel like a young man living in hell.

Behind four white walls me myself feeling like a Satan,

Living in a hood full of drugs, violence and hatred.

In a chase with police,

Like I'm running through a Matrix.

Ain't got nothing else to live for,

But paper chasin'.

-Myesha

From The Beat: Myesha, you have a lot to live for. Leave the paper chasin' to the drug dealers, violent folks and haters in your neighborhood. Your mind is stressin' because of the environment you are in, or come from. You should think about finding something else to live for, something besides paper chasin'. Paper chasin' is necessary, but you need to find something else too. What else in your life makes you happy? Friends? Family? What can you focus on that will help you to enjoy life day by day, without stressin' you out?

Living in a hood full of drugs, violence and hatred

to MY friend, Négro, in m4x'

What's up, Négro? It's me, your boy, Gato. Just chillin'. How you been in there? Hope you're stayin' strong and coo' — no matter how much time they give you, you're still going to get out.

Man, I miss kickin' back with you, just being some fools. I heard you got in a fight. Well, shhh happens, but try to be coo' and avoid suckas.

And don't trip — we are going to see each other again one of these days. Just remember that we are homeboys for life, and I'll be here for you. Whenever you need a hand, just call.

I'm going to write you, too, so we can keep in touch. So just be coo' and do your time. Much love and respect to Armando. Be coo'. Alrato.

-Young Gato

From The Beat: Just make sure you don't get together behind the walls of the pen, okay? Solidarity is cool if it provides a friend a place to stay or a meal or a reference for a job; support when they try to do the right thing. But when it leads to locked doors and/or death, it's not love but something else. A friend would never lead a friend into danger.

the pain

My head is spinning

The floor disappeared

I don't think I'm winning

It's exactly as I feared

These faces are changing

Where's the TV?

Is it getting hot in here?

Or is it just me?

Everyone's laughing

Am I going insane?

Time to start packing

I hate all this pain.

-Crystal

From The Beat: You're a humorous writer. There is a theory that the best way to cope with pain, fear or even anger is with a sense of humor. Do you think this is true?

What Should I Do?

Man, this weekend I had bumped this twenty-one year old on Saturday, and she told me that she had a daughter. But she looked hella good!

Now she asked me to go to the movies with her sometime, but I don't know about all that. 'Cause she might try to bring her baby. And, you feel me, it's gon' look like I'm the baby/daddy, or like I am trying to play step-daddy.

And Sunday evening when she was taking me to Camp, she told me that she had two sisters — and I have already did the grown-up with her sister that is my age. So what should I do?

-Lil' Ant

From The Beat: You already seem to know you're headed for trouble. You need to look beyond "she looked hella good!" But as far as playing step-daddy, every baby deserves all the love in the world!

ALWAYS ON MY TOES

all of us homies here at camp need to know that even though we make mistakes and fall down there will always be a way to stand up so keep your head up and stay firme hasta la muerte — alrato

-Lil' Will

From The Beat: When the group is a weight like a ball and chain, each pulling the next one down the drain — one love, would mean each helping each, rise above the destructive mentality of the street.

in the Hall

I'm writing about my life, and how it is good and how it is bad. The bad thing is I am now in the Hall and it really sucks.

I have an anger problem and I am in a gang. So, I fight any ninja that got on the wrong color. I also live in a group home. So, when I am getting out the Hall, I cannot say I am going home. I do not know where I am going to end up. That's why I don't never be in a rush to get out the Hall.

-Lil' Eyco

From The Beat: Being in the Hall does suck. Having an anger problem sucks and going to a group home sucks. What doesn't suck about your life? We want to hear the good. When you focus on the positive, you feel positive. Besides, the sucky stuff is fixable. The Hall and group homes are temporary, and you can get help with anger management. Where do you see your life going? Where do you want to end up?

to MY Lil' brother

Hey bro! It's your big brother. Hey, how have you been over there? Hopefully you've been coo' and you're stayin' strong.

You know we both need to straighten up. Remember when we always would soak 'em in the park, always drinkin' on some King Cobras with the Clamato mixed in it. You were always the youngest one out of us all — but still posted. I don't know anyone your size and your age that could hang. You a straight rider!

Remember us two being locked up in the same unit, just chillin' together? Man, it's a shame they caught you up, even though I was already in the Hall. I really miss being out on the spot with you, just chillin' and running around acting fools.

Don't worry, we are going to meet up again. But until then, stay up and stay strong. You know it's going to crack when we meet up again! So just keep coo' and do your program. To my lil' brother, Chucky — much love and respect from your big bro'.

-Young Gato

From The Beat: If you all at Camp didn't have to click up so tight, Chucky might be there right now. Oh well, last we heard he was heading to a group home in Fremont, so at least he'll be near your mom. When you both have home visits, you can hook up. But try to be a better example and better influence. You feel?

release!

Faces Turning

The walls are churning

Looks like the ceiling just won't stop burning

Look at me now

I'm shrinking

I'm growing

My feet disappeared!

Nah! I'm just joking

Hopefully this time I'll keep myself from

choking

Why won't these people stop their poking?

Fall to the floor to find some peace

Release!

-Crystal

From The Beat: Funny piece you wrote here. What inspired this work?

I Hate My Life

I hate my life, because the things I do is wrong and not good. I came to Juvenile Hall for robbery and I hate my life.

I miss my hyna (girl) very bad, she is my love. I've been with her for a year and a half. I'm not scared to be in here, I'm scared because of my loved ones. They worried about me, that I hate my life.

-Danny Boy

From The Beat: You don't have to hate your life. You have a hyna that you love and loves you back. Love is one of the greatest things life has to offer, and you've got it. Your situation in the Hall is hard, no doubt. But, it's not forever. What is that first day going to be like, when you step out of the Hall and see your hyna, what are you going to say? What will you be wearing? Where will you be? That moment will make you love life again, focus on that. What do you think?

All Your Words

Finally starting to be too much

Dreaming of friends and each outside touch

Missing your faces

The good times we had

Missing your voices

These four walls make me go mad

Staying up every night

Regret my mistakes

Maybe you'll never realize

But you're the biggest thing at stake

I know I'd be fine

With just a simple phrase

For now, all your words

Will be with me always

-Crystal

From The Beat: When we are removed from our family and friends it feels like we are all alone. And in the Hall all we have is our memories. What do you miss most about your friends? What words are with you? What are some of your cherished memories? If you could be with all of your friends anywhere in the world right now, where would you want to be?

stay safe

To all the people out here, all I have to say is stay safe and stay out of jail, because it ain't cool in here, and try to get out of the system because it ain't cool — once you in, you can't never get out.

You know what I mean, it is like the game, if you in it, it is hard to get out. So stay real and not fake and take advantage of yo' gateway so peace and stay safe.

-M B2

From The Beat: What do you mean by "take advantage of your gateway"? Is that the same as opportunity? Tell us more.

when i Leave . . .

I feel good because I'm leaving this place and going to a group home, only for three months. But they're taking long as hell to come and get me, but I'm not going to run.

-Young Keezy B2

From The Beat: We're glad you've decided not to run. It's best to make that decision right now. What do you think could make it hard to keep this promise?

Always There

One day walking to the store I noticed a man sitting in front of the store. He had been there for at least one month. I know this because when I went to basketball practice, every day I had seen him. And every time I seen him, he was drinking liquor.

-LaDarius B2

From The Beat: Good writing: it's short but powerful. What a sad image. How old do you think this man is? Have you ever talked to him? Does it ever make you think about how bad drinking and doing drugs can get?

wasted A Lot of time

Man, when I get out, I feel like, damn, I just wasted a lot of time doing nothing. Then I look back like, damn, if I never did this or that I would not even be writing in this Beat Within.

-Lil' Carl B2

From The Beat: True that, Lil' Carl. Are there any things you can do in the Hall that will help you use your time wisely instead of wastefully?

Bailt And Broken

While being behind these walls, I do feel as though I'm being given the opportunity and support to build myself up, because I eat more. And I'm being broken down because I'm wasting time being here, like when I get out I know it's going to be some new shhh that comes up.

-J-Stub B2

From The Beat: We so hope you won't contribute to breaking yourself down when you get out, J-Stub. You're right, new shhh will come up, and it will always come up, the question is whether you can stay out of it.

I Feel Lost

When I get out I feel lost. Time usually moving so slow when I'm out, but when I'm in or locked up, time moves so fast.

-LaDarius B2

From The Beat: Interesting. Most people say the opposite. What makes the time in the Hall go by quickly?

Reminiscing

It's tough when me and the homie, Cam, sit in this place and reminisce about all the good times we had with the dead thugs. It's hard to just sit in here and accept all the homies dying and we can't do nothing about it. RIP P-Bo, Fresh, Drama, Shawn, and can't forget the big homie, Tommy Fats.

-Bear Weezy B2

From The Beat: It is sad to think about all those who have passed. Crazy thing, too, is that there is very little you could have done to prevent their deaths even if you had been out, and you sure can't bring them back when you're released. Maybe the biggest service you can do for them is to stay alive as long as possible so you can keep their memories alive.

When I Get Out

When I get out of here I am not coming back. I am going to go see my PO and not smoke. No, I am not going to hang out with the same people.

-Tony B1

From The Beat: That is as solid a game plan as we have ever read. How will you put this plan into action? What made you want to get your life on a more solid track and stay free? We believe that you can do it if you stay determined. Failing and failing are not the same thing. But failing and not getting back up are the same as failing. Congratulations for getting back up!

Beef Everywhere

Like four months ago, before I had come here, I was doing good. I was doing good, but I went to a party a couple of people had.

So after the party, there was a shooting jump off. One of my ninjas got shot, went to the hospital, he died. Then we never went to a black Saturday again.

RIP Scharod, Ray, Dad, Chris.

RIP all fallen soldiers.

It's dangerous when you go everywhere because it's beef everywhere.

-Joseph Morales

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear that your friend died. You must be going through a lot right now with that on your mind and then being locked up so soon after. How are you dealing with it all? Do you really think that there is beef everywhere? How will you avoid it when you get out?

MY NUMBER ONE

(Dedicated to Dennise)

Every night, I sat in my room miserable and depressed prayin' for the Lord to send me someone like you, and he did. He sent me an angel from the Heavens above to bring someone like you in my life.

When the time come and we meet, I will be there to please you. No games, Mami. It's real. You feel me.

-Terrell B4

From The Beat: How did the Lord manage to send you someone while you're locked up? If you haven't met Dennise, yet, how do you know this is a match made in heaven?

**It's dangerous
when you go
everywhere
because
it's beef
everywhere.**

SUMMER

It's summer time. That mean more guns gon get shot than a ball in the NBA playoffs, and then you got bodies dropping like tears. I can't lie, I'm happy I'm here.

Tell that mom it's ok to drop her tear, because her only son ain't here. Tell his lil' bro it's ok, this type of shhh happens every year. Matter of fact, half of us today ain't gon be here next year for the summer, so even though school get out, don't forget life's getting take out.

-Lil Dakota B4

From The Beat: Why do you think that half of you won't be around next summer? We know that some of you will not make it through another year (whether due to shootings or prison), but half of you! No! What will you do, personally, to make sure you will be around to appreciate next summer?

Moving Out At Eighteen

I'm about to be seventeen August 4, 2004, and when I turn eighteen, I'm movin' out my house. I'm not going to be like some people still livin' wit' moms at 28 years old to like 30 years old, still livin' in they house.

I'm out 'cause we out of time.

-Cudabeez B5

From The Beat: Damn, you're young for all that you've experienced in life! We feel you in this piece, Cudabeez, because when we were your age, all we wanted to do was to move out. Eighteen is a good age to leave home — but leaving home is just the beginning. Then you have to make a new home for yourself, with all the heavy responsibilities that go with it. We hope when the time comes that you're ready to take them on in a legit way...



Built Or Broken

While being in here, I feel that it doesn't support me. It doesn't help me at all. They just have us in here so they could make money, and they let us out.

They know we're coming back. It's just a time out, then you will just come and go.

I don't think the program helps me. It makes you worse because you would come here so many times that you'll feel that you can't do good in the outs.

That's what I think about the Hall. I think it kind of helps me in a way, too, because while I was here, I stopped doing some things.

-Jovanny B1

From The Beat: The system is set up in a crazy way, but don't you feel that you have some choice in what you do when you get out and how that will affect your freedom? We hope that the good things that you learn in the halls influence your decisions on the outs more than the bad ones. What have you stopped doing since you got here? Will you start doing those things again when you're free, or will you do the smart thing and stay out of here?

broken down

I feel like I'm being broken down. I know it. I feel it. I think my probation officer knows, and she one of the few people that are breaking me down. I don't like them breaking me down, but there's nothing I can do. I don't like this. They are messing with me.

-Juicy-Loo B5

From The Beat: We don't understand why there is nothing you can do to prevent yourself from being broken down by the system (or your PO). Are you just a helpless, passive vessel, and whatever happens to you, you have no control over it?

Cupcakes

I miss my girl, damn I miss her. I miss her because she's the only one I care about even though I got girls. This the wife, so I got to keep that tucked.

I miss her because she's a thugged out bird, do anything I want. And the way I'm feeling, I give her everything that she wants.

Man, go out there and be with the one you love.

-Cheez LCBS

From The Beat: You love her, but in the next breath call her a B. You love her but in the next sentence you say you have other girls. What kind of love is that? Does the girl have a mind of her own? Doesn't seem like it if she's doing everything you want. You are still young Cheez, how do you know if she's the one for you?

Stay Out?

Being in the Hall is not cool.

So when you get out, stay out,

Don't be a fool.

-Meka GU

From The Beat: Indeed. We hope we won't see you in here again.

the Last dance

Ya know it's ya boy Jd., nine months in the hole, got to do two years to touch down.

I'm ready to do what I gots to do and bounce, and holla at The Beat fo' a job to get settle on my feet.

I'll be writing to y'all at The Beat. Until then, I'll holla at you next week.

-Jd B5

From The Beat: We'll look forward to hearing from you whenever you feel like writing. When it's time, you will be welcome to come to the office and join the family...

Zoned Out...

I've had a bad trip once off a thizz pill. I was tweaking, my heart was pounding too fast, and I was gasping for air. I really felt like I was gonna die.

That was the last time I popped a pill. Now that I've been locked up for fourteen months — and when I heard about that girl from Belmont who died — makes me kinda cautious about popping any more pills.

-Weasel B5

From The Beat: Your own experience, plus the knowledge that a young girl ODD on Exo, would make us more than cautious, it would put us off that drug forever. What did you do when you thought you were going to die?



wasting time

I don't feel like I am being given an opportunity because being locked up ain't cool. They tell you when to go to the bathroom, when to eat and sleep.

I feel like I am wasting my time because I didn't even do any crime. Now I am here. But the good thing is I know I am getting out.

-George B1

From The Beat: If you didn't do the crime why are you doing the time? Is your attorney stepping up to get you free? Have you filed a report against the police department? These are the steps that you should take to get free. We can't promise they will produce results, but without doing these things, there's no way to correct the mistake you say the system made.

Kids Have Kids

She opened up her legs but can't feed what came out. Her mom told her to use her head, but she keep givin' it out. Only just a teen, but got to feed two mouths in the bed. It's the only way she see to help herself out.

Time's getting hard, and her mom kicking her out. So she let nothing but her legs to open. I can keep goin', but I'm gon stop. This to all my sisters that live the life having kids while they are kids.

-Lil Dakota B4

From The Beat: We have seen the terrible consequences on the lives of children having children, so we appreciate you're trying to talk sense to young girls. At the same time, do you think young men, also just children, have some responsibility for bringing children into the world, too? In other words, why don't boys who engage in sex take the simple precautions necessary to prevent pregnancy and STDs? When we read of the number of youngsters in the Hall who have babies, we wonder why nobody seems to be teaching y'all about the importance of condoms. After all, it takes two to make a baby...

Accepting An Apology

I read your publishing, Afro, and I'm not one interfere in others' business, but you sent an apology letter to a ninja saying, "You almost took someone he loved but God wouldn't let you."

I'm just happy that you didn't do whatever you tried to do because the way you wrote your letter to Mr. B, I can tell that you respect, fear, and somewhat are afraid of the dubious outcome that Mr. B would have released if you would have took someone he loved.

The fear that you have is natural fear that a lot of children have when they take certain steps, hop into a man's shoes which are too big for them.

Well, I have to wrap this up but I hope you'll think about all of your choices in life and simply look at the choices you made along with the steps you took to be forgiven. But then again, it's up to you how you weigh it.

Do you think he's a reasonable guy? Does he know what your talking about? Is this story you have real? Remember one thing, you only need God's forgiveness even in death.

-Pg B5

From The Beat: Well, we talked about this so we know who and what you are talking about, but most Beat readers will be in the dark about this. We think it takes a degree of maturity, a man's sense of right and wrong, to step up and apologize, so we can't agree that whoever apologized to you is a child. Of course, it also takes a man to accept an apology like the one offered — so we're happy that we have two youngsters who are maturing into strong young men!

Juicy's Interview with Weasel

Juicy: So what's up wit' you son?

Weasel: It ain't nothin' wit' me, kid. Just up here in the "Max" unit. You know... just fo' tomorrow's lil' pass!

Juicy: So what do you got planned?

Weasel: Food and sex.

Juicy: So which one is it going to be, kid?

Weasel: You know, you know, you know!

Juicy: I feel that son.

Weasel: All right, kid. I'll cut it there and holla back.

Juicy: Until next week's piece, we out.

-Juicy And Weasel B5

From The Beat: Well, we noticed you said you were planning food and sex? What about the food? Who cooks it? What do you particularly hunger for (we're talking food here...)? Do you cook? What?

straight world...

I want to get my life straight for my girl
and be with her for the rest of my life.
I want to get married and have a baby.

-A

**From The Beat: Get your life straight for yourself
and get plenty of exercise. Take a cold shower.
Wait a while for those babies.**

My World

Today I went to court and got a deal. It kept me in
juvenile court and on juvenile probation. I guess it
was better than the alternative. I've been in here for
a month and a half and I have more time to serve
before I am sentenced.

-Anonymous

**From The Beat: Your world will change.
Everything changes. The question is — how
would you like it to change. What will you do
to make the world you'd like to live in a real
possibility?**

I Know Him

(After a line by Susan Browne...)

I know him, that man.
I know him by every step he makes, by
how he thinks, how he acts,
what he likes,
what he doesn't like.

-Juan

**From The Beat: This, too, is a fine poem.
We know you've just started to enjoy
the pleasures of writing. Keep at it.**

Miss You

everything is easy to overcome,
like pain,
I miss my home and, like the song says
every move you make,
every step you take,
every smile you fake,
every bond you break,
I'll be missing you.

-M

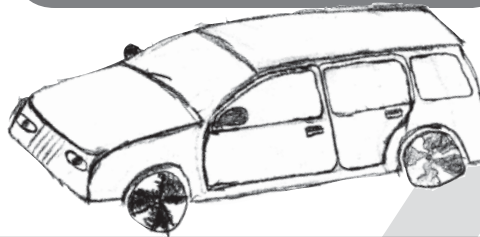
**From The Beat: And how easy is that
to overcome — that missing of a loved
one?**

in my world

In my world I wouldn't be in this place. I wouldn't
have done the crime so I wouldn't be doing
the time. In my world I would never have done
anything to get in the system, or anything to
disappoint my parents. I wouldn't be looking at
serious charges.

-G

**From The Beat: But here you are, so this is
your world, after all. The main thing now is to
transform your world, to make it possible for
the future to be better than the past. What are
your dreams? What would you really like to do?
Identify your dreams and start making plans.**



Juvy

Juvy is nothing to me.
It is a daycare center.
I don't mind coming here.
Maybe kids come in and out of here
because it is so easy.

-Sarah

**From The Beat: Is it better than home? You say it's so
easy. Is that why you keep getting sent to the Hall
— because it's an easy price to pay for the bad choices
you make? What happens when you turn 18?**

old soccer ball

I was an old soccer ball.
It felt like someone was playing with me,
kicking me back and forth.
But the ball was getting old.
I started to notice it.
I wasn't the ball anymore.
I was the player.

-Juan

**From The Beat: This is a fine poem. You keep
writing. Now that you are in Juvenile Hall, do you
still feel like the player or have you taken the role
of the ball again? What's gonna happen when you
get out?**

Future

I am thinking of the future, of what I'm going to be like,
how I'm going to do it. Will it be hard? It may be, but not
impossible. In my world I'd like to have fun and enjoy
life.

In my world, I'd like to experience a lot of stuff.
There aren't any impossibilities in my brain. Me — I don't
give up so easily. Me — I like to fight for it.

-J

**From The Beat: Stay focused and remain persistent.
These are the keys to success.**

Marin

Four Walls

Living in your room, seeing four walls as you think about the outsides,
as you sleep at night and you dream about you being out and having
any type of food.

-Young Skin

**From The Beat: If you were out right now, what would you be
doing? Who is responsible for you being inside? How will you be
sure, when you get out, that you'll stay out?**

Do It Build You Or Break You?

Does it kill you or make you foul?
When I'm in the Halls
All I'm thinkin' is havin' a ball
When I get out

-Tip

**From The Beat: Can you have a ball without doing anything
illegal? Then you won't have to worry about ever going back up
into Juvy. Good luck!**

Drugs — A State Of No Return, Sometimes

Drugs are the one ultimate thing that ties the mind to a state of no return, sometimes. Why
say, "Forget it," if all that would do is end you right back in here? "Forget it" is not in my
vocab any more. I ain't an addict that needs help to get back on my feet.

Every day I try to learn something new, because if I don't, I feel like I'm wasting my
time. Every day passes me by quicker than a blink of an eye. When I think about freedom, it
scares me a little.

-Emmanuel

**From The Beat: How long have you been inside, that you're a little frightened of
getting free? Do you think what you need is to learn to trust yourself? When you're
offered drugs, do you feel that you owe it to anyone — your homies, to get high
with them? Or do you only have to answer to yourself? Do you have the strength to
decline the next time drugs are there for you? We hope so.**

bob barker

I hate Bob Barker. He makes my life miserable
His stupid mattresses and pillows make my body ache
His toothbrushes don't clean my teeth
And my Bob Barker shoes hurt my feet
And I came from the Ben Andre Boy's Center
And Bob Barker was there, too

I went to Our House in the town of Bob Barker
And I guess Bob is cool

Because he makes me not want to come to any Bob Barker facilities

When I say Bob Barker, I mean cheap and uncomfortable

So whenever even I think of getting in trouble

I think of the Bob Barker Company

And how uncomfortable his green mattresses are

And his green pillows, too

So Bob Barker, screw you

-No Vato

**From The Beat: Thank you for letting us know that the Bob
Barker Company manufactures all the mattresses, pillows, and
sandals, etc. that y'all have to sleep on and wear in Juvy. They
may be lumpy and ugly, but do you have any idea what juvenile
facilities are like in, say, Brazil? Ain't nothin' nice, your poem is
really funny, but what about a little gratitude? Whose fault is it
that you're inside, sleeping on Bob Barker stuff and wearing his
stuff? How can you get yourself in a Serta mattress?**

Where I Run And Play

Marin City is where I run and play
I hate folks tryin' to slang yay
I wanna go dumb like tack in the day
I can't wait 'til I see the bright of day

-Jake

**From The Beat: What does going dumb like tack in the day
mean? What will you do when you next see the bright of the
day, and how will you make sure you get to see whenever the
sun shines?**

**Every day I try to learn something
new, because if I don't,
I feel like I'm wasting my time.**

Stupid

Today sucks
Don't lie to me
I thought I was leaving
You said I was
How dare you take your word away
you creepy sneak?
Why can't I leave?
I hate you
for once I was happy
after how long?
You took it away
you made me angry
My knuckles are black and blue
I hate you
I want you to die
This system is screwed
Screw you and your stupid system
I hate you!

-Desiree

From The Beat: The system causes a lot of grief for a lot of peeps. Do you think most of the pain you're caused is understandable? Or do you think it could be avoided? If avoidable, what are the ways the system could adjust to make life a little easier for

Just Me And My Skate

One of my favorite things to do is skateboard. I am currently with a chocolate skateboard, some royal trucks, chocolate wheels and girl bearings.

I love to skate because it always feels good to land a new trick. And living next to the beach just makes it five times funner. I can relate to skating like other people relate to music or something, because anytime I need to blow off some steam or just to get from one place to another, I can just grab my board and just go skate. But there're consequences, like cops.

-Will

From The Beat: Sick skateboard combo. We hope the law won't kill your love of skating. Are there ways you can work with the law, like finding legal skate areas?

MOM

You kill me. You're so funny, all you say is I love you; I can't wait for you to come home. Well, when the time comes, why is your back turned against me? I love you, but only out of obligation, because you're my mother. I swear, if you weren't my mother, I swear you would pay for tearing my heart in two. You would drown in my lake of warm salty tears. You would choke on the blood from my cuts. You would go to hell.

Why is it you do so much and I get blamed for it all? Do you know you used to be my hero? You used to take away the pain, but now that is all you bring. Stop, think what you're doing. You're gonna lose me soon if you don't change.

-Desiree

From The Beat: Man, that's a lot of anger, Desiree, and it sounds pretty justified, too. What has changed between you and your mom? When did she stop protecting you and start hurting you? What would she need to do to be a good mother? What would you do differently if you were in her place? What would you do the same? Is there anything you could do to help improve the relationship between you and your mom?

MY problem

What's my problem? Well, my problem is drugs. Drugs are the gateway of all the crimes that I commit. I get out of JSC and try and get high by trying to fool my PO by smoking what ever it was right after my PO checked up, but that was my problem.

I always try to go against the grain. I needed to know what I know now and that is to go with the grain, and run with the system, and you will eventually get out. I'll just keep riding until my problem is solved.

-Justin

From The Beat: What is going with the grain mean to you? Is it staying legal? Sober? Not lying? What do most people do to stay out of incarceration? How are you going to follow that grain when times get hard?

If I Could

If I could do something different it would probably be that I wouldn't have drank so much these past years because it has mostly gotten me locked up. I also wouldn't have messed up in school so much when they had gave me chances to do good.

About a month and a half ago, I got some new charges and I was drunk when they caught me. I was supposed to go to placement, but the judge gave me a chance. I came back two weeks later for being late to school and arguing with a teacher. I might get out, but I don't know yet. If I get out, I'm gonna do hella good, but I'm not gonna talk, I'm just gonna do it.

-Peace

From The Beat: Let's see it happen. Do you have a plan to back up your talk? How are you gonna stay away from the temptations that keep getting you locked up?

Surprise

I made a phone call and I got a surprise. My sister has another baby. Inside I am so excited I'm upside down. My face has a smile, not a frown.

I love my niece; she is as beautiful as can be. She even looks exactly like me. Now she has a new surprise, that her mother brings another child alive. All this ran through my head when I was told by Gail. But too bad I can't celebrate since I am still in jail.

-Kay

From The Beat: You can't be there in person, but are there other ways you could be part of the celebration? Send a card? Give a call? Tell your roommate about it? Also, are you making a plan to stay out so you won't miss the next celebration?

¿sabes Lo qué estás Haciendo?

Pues, yo pasé por unos jales mechines, pero la verdad, no les puedo decir lo que hice porque no lo puedo decir, pero esa experiencia me enseñó a no usar drogas. La verdad es que no te das cuenta de lo que estas haciendo cuando te la pasas endrogado. Pues, yo no pienso usar drogas nunca mas.

From The Beat: Eso esperamos que nunca te envuolcre en esas cochinada. Que gusto nos da saber que has aprendido que esas cosas no te llebarán a nada bueno.

don't know whqt you're doing?

Well, I've done my share of bad things, but honestly, I can't let you know what I did because I can't. But one thing that I learned from that experience, was not to use drugs. The truth is, you don't realize what you're doing when you're high. Well, I don't plan on ever using drugs again.

-Juan, Marin

Lo Que Haría

Lo que me gustaría hacer es ir con mis amigos, ir a la escuela para tomar cervezas. Quiero salir de la juvenile porque a cada rato me meten a mi cuarto. Saliendo de aquí voy a visitar la tumbpa de mi carnal. Después ir a buscar a mis amigos para hacer fiestas.

From The Beat: ¿Crees que illendo a andar en parties con tus amigos va a solicionar las cosas que te estan trayendo a este lugar? Tienes que pensar muy bien las cosas que quieres para no caer a este lugar otra vez.

What I Would Do

What I would like to do is go with my friends and go to school so I can drink beer. I want to get out of Juvenile because every minute I'm being put in my room. When I get out of here, I'm going to go visit the grave of my bro'. After doing that, I'm going to go look for my friends so we can have a party to celebrate my release.

-Jacob, Marin

Voices In Spanish

sé que puedo

Yo estuve trabajando. Vivo en Mexico con mi familia quienes son mi mamá y mis hermanos. Soy un trabajador, un gran joven, y sé que puedo salir adelante con mi familia.

From The Beat: Que bien que seas trabajador, esperamos que cuando salgas le demuestres a la gente que te rodea lo que realmente eres. Sabemos que uno puede salir adelante siempre y cuando uno quiera.

i know i can

I was working. I live in Mexico with my family who consists of my mother and my brothers. I'm a hardworker, an outstanding adolescent, and I know that I can come out ahead in life with my family.

¡No A Las Cosas Malas!

A mí no me gustan las casas malas como las drogas. Mi familia nunca han echo cosas malas en la vida, pero otras personas si lo han hecho. Nos somos como unas personas que hacen cosas malas, pero nosotros sólo hacemos cosas buenas.

From The Beat: Que bien que nadie en tu familia haya usado o hecho cosas malas. Esperamos que tu dejes de andar en estas cosas porque ser el primero en la familia está cabrón.

Not To Bad Things!

I don't like bad homes, for example, homes where drugs are consumed. My family has never done any of the bad things in life, but other people have. We're not like some people who do bad things; we only do good things.

Mi Problema

Mi problema es que no escuchaba lo que mi familiares me decían, no me importaba lo que ellos creían, o lo que sentían.

Siempre me decían lo que era lo mejor para mí

Pero yo no les hacía caso aunque sufrían por mí.

Después de mucho tiempo se cansaron

De repetirme las mismas cosas,

Y se apartaron de mi lado dandome excusas,

Diciendome que era rebelede y que no podían controlarme

Fueron cobardes al ver que no podían ayudarme

Sólo mi mamá estaba ahí para soportarme,

En todos esos momento que no podía levantarme.

I love you mom.

From The Beat: Fabuloso, te salió genial. Este poema está bien hecho. Ahora, esperamos que después de esto empieces a escucharlos, porque la mera neta lo que ellos quieren es lo mejor para ti. No creemos que ellos se alejaron de ti, creemos que a lo mejor tu lo alejastes de ti.

My Problem

My problem is that I did not listen to what my family members would tell me I used to not care about what they thought or what they felt.

They would always tell me what's best for me

But I didn't listen to them even though they suffered for me

As time passed

They got tired of repeating the same thing over and over to me

And they abandoned my side, giving me excuses

Telling me that I was hardheaded and that they could not control me

They became cowards once they saw that they could not help me

Just my mother was there by my side to support me

During the moments when I could not lift myself up

I love you, mom.

-Postrulo B1, SF/YGC

Algunos De Mis Problemas

Uno de mis problema es que estando en este país no puedo hablar Inglés porque mi idioma es el Español.

El otro problema que tengo es que mi familia esta preocupada por mí y por unas deudas de viaje que he estado realizando durante unos días atras como inmigrante.

From The Beat: Bueno la verdad es que uno de tus problemas se pueden solucionar, siempre y cuando estudies. No temas amigo, todos tenemos problemas y siempre hay solución. Ten calma y cree en tu creador, que te ayudará.

Some Of My Problems

One of my more serious and recurring problems in this country is the fact that I do not know how to speak English, because my native tongue is Spanish.

Another problem that I have is that my family is worried about me and a few days back, I started to worry about some of the debts I incurred from my journey.

-Diego, Marin

No Cambiaría Nada

Que Vole, soy el Pollo. Vivo la vida como venga y me atengo a las consecuencias por lo que hago. Yo no cambiaría nada de lo que he hecho porque las cosas pasan porque tienen que pasar y si cambiara algo, la vida no tubiera sentido. Todos aprenden de sus errores como yo.

From The Beat: Estas en lo cierto sobre lo que dices que las cosas pasan porque tienen que pasar, pero está mal que hagas cosas que provoquen cosas malas a ti o a los demás. Hay cosas que pasan porque Dios las manda, pero hay cosas que el humano hace y después se arrepiente. Y vemos que tú no has llegado a esa etapa de arrepentirte de los errores que has cometido. Esperamos que no sea demaciado tarde.

I Wouldn't Change Anything

What's up, this is Pollo. I live my life to the fullest and I take any consequences that come with it. I wouldn't change anything I've done because things happen because things have to happen, and if I change something, things wouldn't make sense. We all learn from our mistakes like I am.

-Pollo, 150 Crew

Lo que Me gustaría Hacer otra vez

Me gustaría irme con mis amigos libre porque nos agarraron. Ya no puedo hacer nada porque estoy encerrado. Si me deportan quiero regresarme con mis amigos. Espero que mi abogado me diga que tengo una oportunidad de quedarme o sino quisiera regresar para ir a donde quería ir y ganarme la vida. Quiero trabajar para mandarle dinero a mi familia.

From The Beat: Esperamos que todo te vaya bien, que te den esa oportunidad que tanto quieres para ayudar a tu familia. Sabemos que estas aquí por tratar de venir y hacer una vida mejor. Queremos decirte que si te llegan a dar esta oportunidad, que no la desaproveches, y que busques la manera como no meterte nunca en problemas para que nunca caigas en este lugar.

What i would Like to do ALL over Again

I would like to be free with my friends because we got apprehended. I can't do anything anymore because I am locked up. If I get deported, I want to be reunited with my friends. I hope that my lawyer tells me that I have the opportunity to stay, or if not, I would like to return so I can go wherever it is that I feel like and be a winner in the game of life. I want to work so I can send money to my family.

-Carlos, Marin

Es Peligroso Cuando ...

¿Q-Vole Raza? ¿Cómo se la han pasado torcidos en las Juveniles? Yo no estoy tan bien porque la neta es que ya tengo mucho tiempo de estar torcido, y ya me quiero ir a mi casa.

Es peligroso cuando andas con los homies tirando una fiesta y pasa algo, tienes que brincar porque sino brincas, te va peor con tus mismos homies. Cuando andas tirando, cruising en las calles, tienes que ponerte trucha, y tener suficiente valor para todo porque cuando te encuentras a un enemigo, o es él, o tú, uno de los dos tiene que caer. Eso es todo, homies. Ponganse trucha.

From The Beat: Eso es verdad pero también tienes que darte cuenta que todo lo que estas haciendo por representar es poniendo tu vida en peligro. Hay mucha gente que ven por ti y no es justo que los haga sufrir. Recuerda en la gente afuera que ellos se merecen lo mejor. Lo mejor seria que tú los tomara en cuenta. Ellos valen más que el peligro que te sometes en la calle.

It's Dangerous When...

What's up, my people? How have you been doing in Juvenile? As for me, I am not doing that good because the deal is, I've been in here for way too long, and I want to go home.

It's dangerous when you're throwing a party with your friends, and something go wrong. You have to get involved because if you don't, it's even worse with your homies. When you're representing, cruising in the streets, you have to watch your back and have enough courage for whatever, because if you happen to run into your rival, it's either you or him because one has to fall down. That's all, homies. Watch your backs.

-Juan, Marin

Quiero Cambiar Mi Vida

Lo que yo quisiera hacer otra vez es cambiar mi vida porque no me gusta la vida que llevo. Todo lo que hago lo hago mal y nada me sale bien. La neta es que estaba torcido en Santa Cruz y había estado torcido ahí por ocho meses y ahora me trajeron para la juvenile de Marin.

Ahora que salga me van a deportar para mi tierra, a Michoacan, México. Les escribo para que los de Santa Cruz sepan que todavía estoy torcido y que todavía no he salido. Me dicen el Mousie y les mando a un saludo.

From The Beat: Esperamos de corazón que tu oportunidad se te llegue a tus manos, que puedas cumplir con todas las metas que quieres. Sabemos que nada te sale bien, pero ya veras que con fe muy pronto llegará lo bueno de tu vida. No te dejes acabar, que nada en esta vida es imposible.

I Want To Change In My Life

What I would like to do again is change my life, because I don't like the life that I'm presently living right now. Everything that I do, I do it wrong, and nothing that I do comes out right. My point is that I was locked up in Santa Cruz for eight months, and now I've been brought to San Rafael's Juvenile Hall.

Now when I get out, they're going to deport me back to my land, Michoacan, Mexico. I'm writing to The Beat to let everyone who's incarcerated in Santa Cruz know that I am still locked up and I have still not been released. They call me Mousie, and I send my greetings to everyone doing time.

-Juan, Marin

Lo Bueno Y Lo Malo

En una parte las Juveniles son buenas porque te ayudan a pensar las cosas, y más cuando te dejan por un rato. Y en la otra mano, son culero porque te cagan el palo los staff, y no puedes soltarles un putaso porque te ponen cargos, y por una cosita que haces, te ponen en tu cuarto, y cuando los miras afuera no te dicen nada. Afuera es otro pedo. Afuera controlamos.

From The Beat: Bueno, sabemos que ellos tienen que mandar ahí, es su trabajo. Pero te decimos una cosa, si a nosotros no nos gusta algo, pues no tomamos lo que no nos gusta. O sea que estar en ese lugar y recibir órdenes fueron opciones que tú escuchastes.

The Good And The Bad

On one hand, Juvenile Halls are good because they help you think about things, and even more so when you're in here for a long time. On the other hand they are bad because the staff hate on you and you can't do anything because they press charges, and just for one itty-bitty thing that you do, they put you in your room. When you look at them outside, they don't say anything to you. Outside is a whole different shhh. Outside, we run things.

-Juan, Marin

KLUMZY Yet another first time contributor stumbles their way into the packed pages of The Beat Within, and we are so grateful for that too! Klumzy comes on point from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. Being a first timer, we do not know too much about him, other than what follows...

**My counselors
were talking
I didn't know what about
Then it hit me
They were reaching out.**

hey beat

I just now got my first issue of The Beat. Just after I opened the envelope I read the letter about how things are with the budget and I want to say I truly understand how it is. I will pass The Beat on to my fellow peers.

I want to send a shout out to (150 counselor) Ms. Wadud for her piece "Get a Real Job!" I don't think it could have been said any better or as real. Much props, Ms. Wadud. I think women earn and deserve much more respect than that. Coming from a young man, I hope it means something to someone.

As I was saying a lot of the stuff in here is great so I also with to send a piece to The Beat. I hope you guys like it, with that said and done, I close this note for now.

All My Life

Without a doubt
There's been no one
Who dared reached out
There was mom and sis
They'd have their say
But reaching out
Wasn't their way
So all my life
There's been just me
To make my own
Work and be free
But freedom was short
Jails were my home
Even inside
I was on my own
Until the other day
I felt something change
It's hard to describe
'Cause it felt so strange
My counselors were talking
I didn't know what about
Then it hit me
They were reaching out.

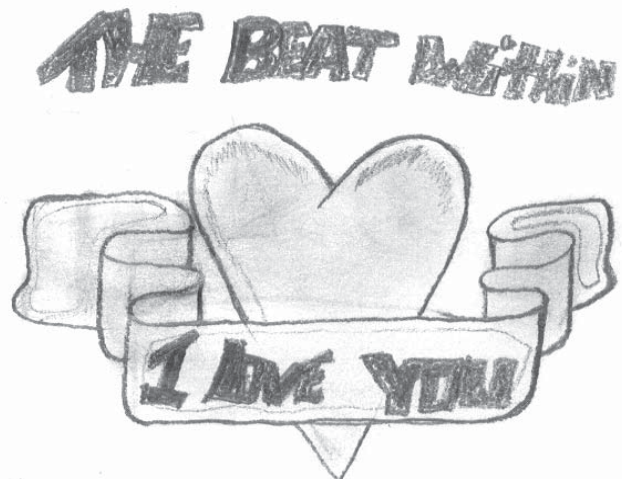
**I just now got my
first issue
of The Beat.**

JAVIER MONTES

We would like to welcome (we assume) first time writer, Javier Montes to the pages of The Beat Without. Javier delivers a heartbreaking poem to say the least. He also informs us that he was sentenced to the CYA in 2003 with a max of eight years. He writes us from the Preston Youth Correctional Facility in Lone, CA. We do hope to hear more from Javier down the road and that he has found some hope while getting through the days in the CYA.

Today I Cried a Tear

Today I cried a tear drop,
Today the tear drops fell,
Now the love is gone from me,
That we knew so well.
I cried all night 'till dawn,
And a letter I tried to write,
For today my heart was broken,
As you walked out of sight.
I don't know how I'll make it.
Or how I'll get along,
I only know that you have quit
And that our love is gone.
So when the sun is shining over the weary sea...
Will you walk the shores of love,
And think a thought of me?



THE POETIC PRISONER

This week, our colleague, takes a moment to step away from community outreach, his editing duties and scanning of Beat art to put his important thoughts down in *The Beat* with two very intense poems — "A Torturous Paradise" and "Happy Father's Day." His words are deep and we think you'll agree should move mountains, as you can't help but feel his pain and anger. The Poetic Prisoner is one of our favorite people, he is an old friend whose name once graced the pages of *The Beat* back in the early days when he was a young detainee in the max unit at SF/YGC.

A torturous paradise

I've existed for twenty-two years and never
have I known a soul that wanted to be incarcerated.
That's why when I got released
I had the false feeling of a man that made it.
But it was a set-up
because being free isn't paradise.
Out here you're expected to give your all,
and still get treated like a parasite.
Sometimes I wish someone would kill me,
so the misery of my life would no longer be true.
But maybe I could transform the things I went through
into learning experiences for you.
Sure, there's a higher chance of having sex out here,
but there's also a higher chance of catching diseases.
The epitome of being free is having the night of your life,
then waking up with white bumps on your penis.
Out here there's a bigger selection of religions,
but in there it's easier to talk to a Jesus.
Opportunities linger inside, but when they arise
out here, you better get off your ass and seize it.
One man's pleasure
is another man's pain.
One woman's loss
is another woman's gain.
It's evident that out here
people live in their own little worlds.
A homeless man sleeping on the same block
as two little girls
in a store buying the most expensive pearls.
And if you're a working class citizen,
the more you sleep, the less meals you eat.
Nothing will be handed to you,
so you have to get up and move your feet.
We are conditioned to depend on a system,
then that very same system sets us free.
I did the crime and the time,
but what good did any of that do me?
They said I had a violent mind and my heart was blind,
yet I did six years and still can't see.
They said my insanity conquered my fantasies,
but paroled me after kidnapping me from reality.
I admit I'm institutionalized,
although I never wrote that down on my list of goals.
I need to be deprived
in order to feel whole.
I can't make it on my own,
I need to be controlled.
You took me away from what I know
you stripped me of my soul.
How can I be mature
if for six years I didn't grow?
I'm stressed and depressed,
staying out is harder than winning the lotto.
How did they rehabilitate me
if each one of my problems wants to be washed away with a
liquor bottle?
I hate Y-A for what it did to me,
but sometimes I wonder
would I have less problems if I was there tonight?
And believe me getting locked back up
is not something I even care to write.
But it seems like no matter how long I live,
I'll still be scared for life.
For freedom is beautiful in a lot of ways,
but it's far from being paradise.
Inside I was treated like dirt,
but out here I'm a parasite.
Don't fall victim to the seduction
of a brutally torturous paradise.

**I will never forgive
you,
Not even if I was
a Christian.
You let your head with
no brains think
for you,
So raising me was
never a part of your
mission.**

Happy Father's Day!

Dear Daddy,
Why the hell did you ever have me?
You left me stranded and unprotected,
You let the cruel world reach out and grab me.
What kind of punk can't control his lust,
And only has time to bust nuts?
What kind of man doesn't understand
That you don't have a child and leave him stuck?
I needed you to keep me in check,
But you left me all alone.
I needed you to guide me,
But you made me suffer on my own.
My house was never a home,
And that's all because of you.
You didn't have to stay with my mama,
But what the hell did I ever do?
If you couldn't take responsibility for me,
Why didn't you use a rubber?
If you didn't want to take care of me,
Why did you have sex with my mother?
All I wanted was to know you,
You could've kept everything else.
I didn't want to be a burden,
But I did need a little help.
I will never forgive you,
Not even if I was a Christian.
You let your head with no brains think for you,
So raising me was never a part of your mission.
You didn't want to stay,
So I hope you suffer when you're old and gray.
I hope you get hit with a bullet gone astray,
Or sliced up like a fish fillet.
Oh, and by the way...
Happy Father's Day.

DORIAN DELEON

The following pieces from Dorian DeLeon are his initial pieces for The Beat Within. He is a friend of Beat writer, Eugene Weems when they were both incarcerated in Soledad State Prison, before Weems was transferred to Rancho Cucamonga. DeLeon, a talented writer, writes about the strict racial rules that predominate in prison and how he and Eugene eluded them, because their friendship was stronger than prejudice. But first, read his powerful story, "What Have I Done In My Life That I Wish I Could Do Over."

What Have I Done In My Life That I Wish I Could Do Over

Shameless as I walked through the crowd of my comrades, with my head high and an expression of seriousness on my face, I greeted them one by one with a tilt of my head, and refrained from pleasing them with my spoken words. "What's up, homie?" Joker asked. Joker was one of my 'rads from the hood. I didn't respond, as though the question wasn't directed at me. I advanced to an empty space against a brick wall and briefly observed my surroundings before looking down at my pants that were three times my size, which I had pulled high above my waistline. I admired the jeans' neatly starched creases that my homeboy, Flako, had impressed into the fabric the night before. I brushed a piece of lint off the snow-white wife-beater that was snug against my masculine chest.

I had walked lightly to avoid dirtying my white leather Nike shoes. Every step I had taken was precise with care. "Say, homie," Joker said, with a now more demanding voice, as he made his way over to where I stood, breakin' my attentiveness to my attire. I glanced up, incurious to whom he was talking, as if he had to be directing his words to someone else, other than myself.

Now standing directly in front of me with a ruffled expression and hostility within his eyes, he asked "What's with you, homie?"

"I have no problem, homie."

"Well, then, when a homie greets you, you greet him back with the same respect, fool."

I glanced back down at my jeans, breaking the eye contact between Joker and me, to avoid revealing the expression of anger that had developed on my face, from being told what I should do. "Say, homie, look at me when I'm talking to you. You youngsters these days have no respect anymore," said Joker, as he pushed my head up to see my face.

I wasted no time releasing a big, leaping right hand to his jaw that followed with several more hard punches, leaving him helpless to the left-right combination, as he went down to the ground. Several of the homies grabbed me, to keep me from attacking him. Joker sprang up and composed himself. I quickly freed myself from

the holds that kept me at bay from stomping Joker, while he was on the ground. He rushed, sweeping me off my feet. We wrestled around on the ground. Joker had nothing going for him, except bulk and his strength. We lay, clinched together, as I tried, strugglin' to break free from his hold, but he was too strong.

My every attempt was to no avail, so I did what I had to do; I begged for help from the homeboys, to get him up off me. They tried to convince Joker to let me up, but he gripped even tighter, trying to catch his breath. So I just bit him on the chest. He screamed and quickly released his hold. We both quickly sprang to our feet. A fast left jab quickly introduced itself to Joker's nose that followed a hard over-hand, telling right. Blood spurted from his mouth. A left hook, a straight right and another left to his chin, Joker was now laying flat on his face, knocked out.

I dusted myself off and noticed that my pants were no longer neatly creased, they were dirty and wrinkled and my white leather Nikes had battle marks of black smudges and scratches from the scuffle on the ground.

I looked at my homie, still lying knocked out and began to feel remorseful. I thought to myself, if only I could do it all over again. I would have controlled my temper so I could have stayed neat and clean, with freshly pressed creases.

Friends in The Silence of The Shadows

First I would like to give your Beat Within readers a little history concerning this prison life I'm forced to live in at the moment. In the level four prisons there are a lot of prison politics and every race has strict rules to follow. Some are not as harsh as others. But I am a Southern Mexican. We have strict politics amongst my people—not to socialize with any Blacks, only to give them mutual respect and common courtesy.

However, me and Malik, who you know as Eugene Weems, have become friends in the silence of the shadows. Just by him being himself with a good heart, I've learned from his actions and ways that he was totally different than the stereotype I was painted. I imagined and conceived of about all Blacks behind these prison walls. He kept it real from the very first day I met him and that was about three months ago. I could say he treated me better than a lot of my so-called homeboys. I have much love and respect for him. We communicate by fishing notes on the line from each other's cell, never verbally over the tier, due to I am a Southern Mexican.

I heard about The Beat Within from Malik aka Eugene. He was talking over the tier to another Black in another cell about they should start reading and writing for the magazine. He was going to send one of the issues down to him. He also sent one to me as well, being that we are in the hole and don't have any type of entertainment. Malik writes gangsta and love stories and shares them with everyone. We enjoy reading his stories and poems. He also entertains the tier by singing songs. He gots skills on writing. He has been working on a new project—he said a book he's putting together.

I've been incarcerated for a year and a half—came back for a new beef. If all goes well, I should be having my freedom back in December of this year. Sad to say, I didn't learn my lesson the first time around, but I can say I've become a lot stronger now. Just my views on things. I'm twenty-five, going on twenty—six in September, and I read what the kids are writing in their poems and letters. I wish I can save everyone, but you know I'm a dreamer!

**Sad to say, I
didn't learn my
lesson the first
time around**

VERO We are extremely honored to have received the following story from our friends at The Center for Young Women's Development in San Francisco. Along with the piece came their intro, "CYA is supposed to rehabilitate and protect girls and boys who are a danger to themselves and or society. But CYA failed Vero (a young woman who wishes to remain anonymous) when in her second trimester of a pregnancy that meant the world to her, Vero went into pre-term labor and subsequently, because of suspected medical negligence on the part of CYA, her unborn child suffered a wrongful death. The Program Director at The Center for Young Women's Development, visited Vero after the incident and described a sweet, soft-spoken, wide-eyed, Latina, with dark circles under her eyes, gaining weight and losing self-esteem behind the walls of Ventura's Youth Correctional Facility." With that said, this powerful voice/writer is no stranger to The Beat Within, a few issues back she shared a powerful poem about the loss of her daughter. We welcome back Vero, who writes us from the California Youth Authority in Camarillo, CA. For your information the other voice in his incredibly tragic piece, which is italicized, is the voice of The Center for Young Women's Development.

vero's story

"I go by the name of Vero. I am 20 years old and I'm currently incarcerated in Camarillo's California Youth Authority. The things I reveal in my writing are not for pity or anything on that level. What I do wish is for those who take time to read what I'm have to say, take time to look at this facility's downfall. I am not in here for smiling at the police. I am far from an innocent bystander, so when I get caught up I've never been the type to trip off of being locked up, but I can no longer sit back and not speak up on CYA's bad-side. Due to Camarillo Youth Authority Medical Negligence I lost my firstborn, my daughter was at no fault for my action, but me being in here without no voice to be heard, or a key to unlock my door, or control of my transportation, my daughter does not exist in flesh but her spirit is always with me.

"CYA has moved on trying their-hardest to gain a good story in the media. For example, they finally decided to honor the many mothers who are on this side of the fence for Mother's Day by arranging the "Get on the Bus Program." Many of the mothers appreciate this event because it has been years since they got to spend Mother's Day with the babies they gave birth to. Due to (the fact) many of the mothers are from the Bay Area and most of their families don't have transportation to come down here, "finally" is the keyword in this event, I don't know why people assume when we are incarcerated we are human beings when you give birth to your firstborn you can't help but to love and nurture your baby-I know from experience, even though my daughter lived only a short 30 minutes. I was really happy that the event took place, it was about time that it happened, but it was for all the wrong reasons. I think that a portion of this event was held for fame and the mother's feelings probably weren't even considered. Before my tragedy happened I was just another ward, but now even the superintendent takes time to acknowledge me. It's messed up that tragedy has to happen to be acknowledged and with this said, it proves my point. I believe the "Get on the Bus Program" was for fame; not for actually acknowledging the mothers because we are just heartless human beings locked up in the authority's eyes.

"On a day-to-day basis Ventura's YA seems to only get worse. Girls seem to forget the outside world and make this place a home. Homosexuality is the biggest thing in Ventura's YA due to boredom and lack of self-respect. The reason I say self-respect is because I've come across a lot of females who would never let another female touch them as a cha-cha (the girly one in some relationships). I am not down-talking homosexuality it's just not my type of thing, but I have had to stay strong-minded, not a lot of girls have that potential. My point on bringing this up is because when we are committed to CYA we are told that the programs and structure of CYA will benefit us, but in reality there is no structure and the programs are not helping us. Maybe its just 'cause we don't want to change but that's not my problem, and that wasn't the problem when I was paroled last time. I want a different lifestyle but I was placed in this institution and paroled to nothing-no support or motivation and nothing to lose, this proving how the system is set up.

"A lot of the females that are currently being housed here are in search for attention love and family and some girls don't look for those things in the right places. The outcome of looking for love and attention on this side of the fence usually leads to added time, better than realizing this place isn't helping many of us they make us stay longer. It took the loss of my daughter for my voice to be heard and it shouldn't be organized like this, but since it is I will take an advantage to

speak up for myself and all of us wards that are on this side of the fence. In my opinion, a murderer still has the right to state their opinion, but does it happen, no. When wards get chances to speak up I've noticed that they worry about kissing ass and not having it bad with staff, and say all the good things about CYA. Not me though, I will speak the truth and not bite my tongue for anyone.

"I've come across a lot of different kind of staff, the majority of them are here for their eight hour shift, but yes there are some that interact with us and go beyond their job duties, I have a good interaction with them. My parole agent is one of the staff that goes beyond her job and dedicates a lot of patience and time to her caseloads. And she is well respected by me and not 'cause she has a badge but as a human being, she doesn't let her power and authority take over her. I'm one of those wards that could care less about a badge or the authority in general; 'cause we are all equal some of us just had a rougher life than others, but everyone is capable of being someone in life. I admit I'm no angel but I'm tired of being isolated from the world just 'cause society believes incarceration rehabilitates us, well that's a lie. Change comes from time, patience and self worth, not incarceration.

"Since the loss of my daughter I've made a commitment to let my voice be heard. I know those of you who read this, are curious to know my background but I don't enjoy dwelling on the past. So, all that I will share is I'm struggling with many obstacles that include drugs, relationships, family and incarceration. I haven't had an easy life and I have issues with my impulse control and I had a glimpse of happiness through my pregnancy, but other than that happiness didn't exist in my life for many years. I haven't ever given up and I don't intend to, especially now that my voice is being heard. I have one goal; I will not give up on receiving justice for the loss of my firstborn.

"Before I end, I would like to share all the good and bad things that have happened after the loss of my daughter. Well, I was returned back to the institution and had to deal with pregnant girls who openly expressed how they didn't want their babies. This affected me so much but no one cared. I started speaking up on my time 'cause on my board papers the board stated to release me after my pregnancy 'cause they said I would receive better medical care in here, wasn't that a big joke. So, I had to deal with so much, but it wasn't until meetings in Sacramento with head-honcho and my mom took place that anyone bothered with me. I expressed all my hurt through violence and better that anyone asking if I was okay I was placed in a camera room naked and had to sleep on the hard bunk with no mattress. Yes, people, this is CYA's rehabilitation, ain't it hilarious all of this right after I lost my baby due to their negligence in the medical department.

"Well my days got better and eventually I started voicing my issue. Very important people were considering my opinions when I made the commitment not to let my daughter's loss be in vain. I was introduced to Girl's Justice Initiative and they brought me so much hope and so did The Center for Young Women's Development and The Beat Within. All these programs are making it possible for my voice to be heard. The loss of my daughter still hurts but I've overcome her loss and I was sharing with another ward that I've made it too far to turn and go backwards, I will not allow it to happen."

Vero's disposition report from Ventura Youth Correctional Facility indicates Vero was seeking to change her life but didn't know how. According to the report Vero was released from California Youth Authority (CYA) on parole in July of 2003. Vero stated she didn't want to be placed in a group

pregnant women in CYA don't get the best prenatal care. I was a juvenile when I got sentenced to CYA so I know how things are,

I have been in the system since age 11

continued from previous page

home. Vero's mother says Vero was always an independent girl and wanted to get her own apartment, but it wasn't easy for Vero because she was a parolee and she didn't have a job. Vero rented a room from a friend and ducked parole supervision for a week or so before she realized she was sick of being on the run and surrendered herself to the local police. Once Vero turned herself in, she was detained for a little while and then released to a sober living environment/group home. Although Vero had stated she didn't want to be in a group home she tried to make it work. She got a job at a local thrift store and started academic classes. The group home provider reported to parole staff that Vero's interactions with the other group home residents were positive. Still, the group home wasn't what Vero said she wanted and only God and Vero know what she would have needed to make it work; Vero ran away after two weeks at the group home.

She was arrested in Oct. 2003, and placed back in Ventura Youth Correctional Facility and she had no idea she was pregnant until a few weeks after she was detained.

The Youthful Offender Parole Board Addendum recommended that Vero remain in CYA because she was pregnant. It says that Vero would benefit from informal counseling in areas like proper decision making, parenting and other programs identified by CYA treatment staff. It also recommends that Vero be detained at CYA until her pregnancy came to full term, which makes me wonder if the caseworkers had any intention of letting Vero parent her child at all because a baby born to a mother who is detained is immediately placed with a legal guardian or in foster care according to state policy referring to incarcerated mothers. The disposition report from the Oakland Parole Department says; Vero's actions of irresponsibility and impulsivity affected the innocent life of her unborn child. But it was California Youth Authority's acts of irresponsibility, not Vero's, that ultimately resulted in the wrongful death of her child.

According to the evaluation of Vero's medical records by Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, the most serious error on CYA's part was the lack of documentation in Vero's medical records when she first complained of spot bleeding on Jan. 23, 2004, three months after her incarceration for shoplifting (the girls in the group home had stolen all of her clothes) and five months into her pregnancy. In her grievance form dated 2/22/04 she clearly writes that she notified unit staff of her bleeding and pain after being allowed to participate in gym exercise. Staff told Vero they had notified medical and that the nurse practitioner said not to worry, she would be on bed rest. In her chart, there was a visit to the clinic indicating a concern of, "glucosuria" and a one-hour glucose tolerance test ordered. One-hour glucose tolerance tests are routine in the second trimester whether or not the patient is spilling sugar and Vero was. Gestational diabetes becomes apparent usually in the second trimester and is considered a risk factor for pre-term labor. CYA's unit staff did not document that they had notified the medical unit of Vero's bleeding. There was consequently no documentation by the nurse practitioner or by a registered nurse that day of placing Vero on bed rest and for what length of time or what a follow-up plan would be if Vero kept bleeding or if the bleeding increased throughout the night and the weekend. When Heidi Strupp, the advocacy coordinator for Legal Services for Prisoners with Children visited Chowchilla Women's Prison, many inmates there were concerned with faulty medical care and the general approach there was, "Don't get sick on the weekends."

Nobody in Vero's unit at CYA cared enough to monitor the process of Vero's increasingly heavier bleeding through that fateful night before she lost her baby. There was no pad count on an hourly basis through the night and when Vero was finally brought down to the medical unit around 1:

00 am in the morning she had to wait an additional two and a half hours before she later ended up in an emergency room at St John's Hospital. It was too late for little Alycia (the name Vero picked for unborn child), by 8:30 pm the next day Vero was under bright lights on an operating table as doctors and nurses tried to do surgery to stop the pre-term delivery process to no avail, Vero was already three centimeters dilated and most likely in early delivery, and the baby died.

We wrote Vero and asked her to help The Center for Young Women's Development write a Bill of Rights for Incarcerated Youth Parents and she readily agreed. She wrote these letters back in her own words...

"Thank you for taking the time out of your day to write me, I would also like to thank you so much for the support and time you are investing in me. I appreciate it so much. I would be more than willing to help write the Bill of Rights for Incarcerated Youth Parents.

"You know the loss of my daughter affected me in so many ways but in her honor and the Lord's strength I have risen again. I just finished writing a poem for "The Beat Within," I wrote it in honor of my daughter. I am doing as many positive things as possible, a lot of females have gone through this (pre-term delivery induced miscarriage), and it's sad that most of the time they're behind these walls with no control. The director of CYA came down this week, we spoke and I let him know that the medical needs improvement. It really hurts that this fucked up system took the one person I had already grown to love so much and it's the medical field that had to do with the loss of my daughter, Alycia.

"...No one seems to hear us. We get judged for our past lifestyles. I will admit I am no angel, I've done many things to the community and my own mother but that doesn't mean I don't have feelings. The loss of my daughter hurt so bad and my wish is for my situation not to repeat itself behind this side of the fence.

"So you ask what I need? The only thing I need is justice, my mom is stressing so hard about finding a lawyer. She explained to me that the system is offering her too little money for a lawyer to get my case. I'm not sure what's going on but if you can help my mother and I find a lawyer and receive justice that would mean so much.

"For the loss of my daughter affected my mother a lot also, I'm her baby no matter what I've done I'm my mom's brat and she was looking forward to her grandbaby, she had even started buying stuff and she was extremely excited, so was I.

"...I'm 20 years-old and a parole violator which means I was paroled last year but got "caught up" ninety days after and I came back to CYA two months pregnant, I am no longer a juvenile case...after my 21st birthday, which is next year, I'm maxed (maximum time to keep a person on juvenile parole) out and I will be off parole but if I mess up and catch a felony case I go straight to the big house.

"My story will still prove how pregnant women in CYA don't get the best prenatal care. I was a juvenile when I got sentenced to CYA so I know how things are, I have been in the system since age 11 ... I'll be 20 this Friday, May 7th at 4:30, just to let you know I'll accept chocolate candy when you come visit. Vero drew a smiley face on the page by this statement.

"Well, thanks for your time, Sincerely, Vero"

According to a report on girls in the juvenile justice system done by San Francisco Probation Department in 2003 approximately one-third of the girls in the juvenile justice system are pregnant or parenting. How many lives have to be complicated and or lost before we as a society wake up and say, stop, let's change.

GOO GOO

Goo Goo, an old school Beat writer drops us a fine poem this week. He was once incarcerated, not long ago, in Alameda County Juvenile Hall aka 150 Crew. He now writes to us from CYA, in which he mentions he maxed out at. Nevertheless, he writes and continues to express himself through poetry. We hope to hear more from him soon. Goo Goo always had a way with words, from 150's A unit to max unit and to Camp. We are glad he is utilizing our publication, even though CYA refuses to grant The Beat access inside, to express his thoughts, with the hope that his words will help some of you Beat readers.

To The Beat Within,

First and foremost let me introduce to you who I am, I've been in and out these pages of The Beat Within for a while now. It's been about a little over a year since I last wrote.

My name is known as "Goo Goo" in the pages of The Beat. I used to share with other writers and readers my advice, poems, and my artistic talent. I've been in and out of the system for a while. I went from foster homes, Juvenile Halls, group homes, Camp, and now CYA, where I'll be for a while. I maxed out, which means I've caught a lot of time. So I got these years to look over.

Well I wrote a poem called "Surviving The Strain." I dedicate this piece of poetry, yet my big piece of advice, to those who live this vida! And especially to the homeboys in the Halls. Just focus on reality in this vida and you could accomplish anything you put your head to. You've got to strive for the better, like myself, I know many of you know from experience.

With that I would like to end this short letra with my appreciation and thanks to The Beat Within. Your magazine whether you know it or not helps individuals express their feelings with the touch of a pen or pencil!

**These words I say can fill
millions of songs**

**We all must keep surviving the
strain and continue on**

TRAVOY

Travoy aka Chunky was one of The Beat Within's most enthusiastic writers from our Marin County workshop. Now he's in ROP (Rites of Passage) in San Andreas, Ca, spittin' some wisdom and experience down to y'all. He's a voracious reader, from reading XXL and Source magazines, to Sister Soulja's novels and "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison.

checking in

What's up, Beat? I'm chilling here at "ROP," doin' my time. I'm proud, because I'm losing some weight. That's why they call me "Chunky."

What's up Black Jack, KG, Lil' E, and Alex? Be good. Change.

I'm up here knockin' Usher, J-Kwon, Lil' John, MP Riders, you know...

What's up, Perkins, Lil' Tony Jones, Rodney, Jackson, Giovanni, Warren, Sneeze, Tigger, Peanut, French and Broken Glass. Be cool. Do your time.

It's cool up here, but it's kinda boring—no females at all. But we got some pictures!

I want to tell you something about me. I'm from Richmond. When I was growing up I was a Moma's. I used to listen to adults. I never used to disrespect my elders.

Mom had a really hard time. Dad left when I was seven, so she had to hustle. For a woman it's not easy tryna raise a man! No brothers or sisters, I was an only

child. I grew up fast, started getting in trouble. I put in work and got in this click called "Ninjas On Da Job" and started being bad. So moma moved from Richmond to Marin to better us, but it only made it worse. Me and my girl Rashayia and my other girl Cynthia started having problems and broke up...When you're in jail, don't expect a girl to wait for you, because she's not! Got on probation, went to a school named County Community. There I met my potnas Black Jack, KG, Eli. We had some good times together and bad.

I've been through the Hall, back and forth, a total of sixteen times! I miss my family and girl. I haven't been with a girl in the nine months I've been locked up, but I have changed. I can control my anger now, without throwing or yelling. I'm proud of myself.

Trouble is so easy to get into but so hard to get out of. I can't wait to get off probation. I want my freedom back. I'm starting to read books. I want to change all of you kids who is livin' like I usta life. You're going to end up in jail or dead, mark my words.

Well, I'm out. Until pen meets paper. RIP, Jay Jay.

surviving the strain

Dedicated to my lil' carnal Green Eyes...

For every adolescent who had to rob to eat

When the times were restless in these streets

Living your life as a loaded gun

Though this strife burns our souls like the sun

You were against all odds surviving the strain

Hatred or retaliation fills your brain

Wondering if you'll make it throughout this pain

There was no love to fulfill your insecurity

But a crooked judge and so-called jury

Yet to some, another tale of a minorities theory

Still I see the non-wealthy, poverty, situations

All the wealthy, heartless, frustrations

It's all based upon the way we choose to live

If our faith is strong then out minds shall give

Yet the hates not gone as crimes get big

In just surviving the strain as the days go on

Or should I say how the days are gone

Or I may be in a maze, which way did I go wrong

These words I say can fill millions of songs

We all must keep surviving the strain and continue on

This life of tragedy fills my mind

Like a knife stabbing me, and chills down my spine

Some are glad to be caught up in time

You could laugh at me as if I walk blind

Now what's happened, you see I signed a dotted line

But will my insanity turn back the hands of time

We must survive the strain

Survive the strain

Survive the strain...

GARY WIPPERMAN

The Beat Within gets around. In this case, it got around to the Pickway Correctional Institution in Orient, Ohio, where Gary Wipperman wrote this cautionary metaphor in rhyme! Every line drips with sad experience, and the whole of it makes us hungry for more.

The Three Ladies Of The Night

There were three ladies of the night
called sex, drugs, and alcohol,
who try to make life seem so nice,
who will lead you down the pathway of ruin
at the choice of your own device.

LADY Drugs

She'll make you think you have plenty of friends around
She'll get you so high, and make your spirits fly,
that you don't want to come down.
She'll take your money and possess your soul,
and leave you lying on the ground,
with nothing left, not even respect,
wondering where all your friends have gone.

LADY Sex

She can work slow, or she can work fast,
and make you think you're in love,
or leave you crying in the night with a broken heart
to pick the pieces up.
She'll drive you crazy, and leave you confused,

not knowing what you're looking for,
she'll leave you unsatisfied and feeling used,
always searching for something more.

LADY Alcohol

Lies in wait, she hides in the confidence at all the
friends you'll meet.
She'll cloud your mind, until your thoughts are blind
then leave you lying in the streets.
She's not cheap, she plays for high stakes when you
decide to roll the dice,
like a spider leading you into the web, that just may cost
you your life.

Sometimes you'll meet them at a party that for you may
have no end, wearing their best.
They're looking for fools, they have no need for friends.
So, if you're a gambler, the right kind of fool,
trying to show that you're a man,
roll your dice, you'll not survive,
where death is the name of the game.

FRENCH COAT WARRIOR

While The Beat Within tries to catch up with the huge volume of powerful, brave writing from youngsters locked up in the Arizona juvenile system, The Beat Without has received these two poems from a young man in that system calling himself French Coat Warrior. We feel his desperation, and can only tell him to hang in there — tomorrow will be better than today! (We don't encourage this direct communication since Arizona is already on our radar screen, but when a youngster steps up...)

I Had It All

I had it all
I thought at least
Everything at my fingertips
Now it's all gone
I've hurt everyone close to me
I've disappointed those who had faith in me
I've destroyed myself
The pain I feel now is unbearable
I don't know what to do anymore
I feel alone, scared, confused, upset, angry,
embarrassed,
Foolish
Help, help, help
I have thoughts running in circles in my head that I
want to give in to
If I do, the pain on those I love will be worse comfort to
my own
I'm pleading for something
Anything
Just some kind of help
Even if it's just talking to someone
That may be what I need
Since I have no other to confide in

Even if it's
just talking to
Someone
That may be
what I need

Looking out

I sit inside myself
Looking out the windows of my eyes
I see many things that bother me
Why they do I do not know
How to stop it is beyond my control
To leave it is harder than one can imagine
I must try though if not for them then for myself
The roads I walk are troubled and full of danger
One must be on this path to understand
But you can be on the end and still not know
When you finish try to help the behind
Even if you don't get it, trying it will mean a lot...
To know you care

MAURICIO FUNES

Mauricio Funes goes where few men ever go — against the grain. Some will call him a coward but many will see him as a hero and truth teller as we do. He is putting himself out there and it is our hopes that if you do not agree, you will walk away or respond in a mature and respectable way — through conversation. Read with an open mind and heart and be ready to be brave enough to question your own beliefs. "True morality consists not in following the beaten track, but in finding out the true path for ourselves and in fearlessly following it." (Ghandi) Mauricio Funes writes us from Pelican Bay State Prison.

Dear Beat Within Readers

I.

How are you doing comrades? Once again I'm writing this piece so that you guys can visualize or identify yourselves with what is in my crazy mind. With this said, I will start by saying something, then asking you a question. I know how some of you feel about holding things back that are eating you inside out, and how it feels to read or see wrong things occurring around your environment, and to be afraid or numb to say or do anything about it. Most of all because we strongly believe or have been lead to believe that's the right thing to see or do, right!?

Well let me tell you brothers, seeing someone else getting hurt or giving orders or commanding others to deal with someone, especially another comrade is a very cruel and sad thing to do. That's straight up wrong! Isn't it the saddest thing to swallow? There is no other way to explain it or express it.

II.

I have come to understand and acknowledge that there are three types of prisoners within these walls. The first one is the one that is either prey or sends others to prey on the young and submissive. These individuals are very cunning, negative, easy to irritate and very manipulative. They lead easily and think they should be put on a pedestal. They won't hesitate to instigate, lie, put your life in danger and raise the spirit of someone with low self-esteem for their own gain.

These types of individuals that pass as your homies or homeboys pick at your brain to categorize you, as a shepherd categorizes his flock and see in what ways he can use them. I know as you do, they all sing the same old song, "we are your homies," "we got your back," "we'll take a bullet for you," "what's mine is yours," "one pull, one strive," bla, bla, bla, etc. When in reality (and let's be honest and sincere with ourselves) if they can't gain anything from you, they will dismiss you, as they have schooled you and taught you to do to others. I'm sure you all know what I'm talking about. Or have seen that at one time or another, right?

III.

We all have felt that if we are not part of their circle, hood or barrio, our friendship means so little, if anything, to them. You are their homito (little homeboy) only and when you are of some use or interest to them, such as when you need it for rayetas (stripes), do their fighting, book (stab) someone, carry or bury their pieces.

And we all hear the same magic words, "Are you down for the cause?" Because this is what the struggle needs of you. When you get to the hole, you will find good homies there. You will receive the best education from the big homies, etc. These individuals wait for the right time to pull their bag of tricks and induce you to hurt good people "our fellow brothers." Brothers that more than likely and probably their only mistake was to grasp some courage, stand their grounds, and question their motives. Something so easy to answer but instead they panic, get irritated, and right away without explanation, deem you as not good because these type of actions are only considered from a bandido (bandit) and are unacceptable within their circle of dedicated soldados (soldiers).

Their sole game is to stay off the holes as long as possible, and take with them to the hole as many good homies too. While the young and submissive do all the dirty work and go from hole to hole, getting indeterminate SHUs because they are so selfish that they wish to see everyone under the same sorry and deprived conditions, gaining more time, sacrificing their families, if not their lives.

They are jealous that you can and wish to enjoy family and

contact visits, make phone calls, and live in an environment where they have not authority or control over what you do or want. They are happy or content with themselves, only while you sink lower on your own standards, driven off the SHU, so far away from our families, that to the misfortune of many, they lose interest in us, due to the lack of money for the long drives, time to write and give moral support through correspondences and above all the physical contact with them. This happens often as you know it.

IV.

Then there is the second type of prisoners, the young and submissive. One recognizes the young from the bunch, not exactly their young faces and energy, but rather for the sparkle that shines within the eyes. When they look at those that are preying on their innocence, their eyes shine idolizing and glorifying what they say, not knowing that they are looking at an image that in the long run, they will find out it was nothing but a mirage, such as the one in deserts. They are more than willing to follow a false prophet.

Individuals that don't practice what they preach, and instead of looking as a proud young man, they act like puppies chasing after their mother's tit. They believe anything that is told to them. When they hear stories of old battles and victories, it puts fire within their young hearts, and inspires them to follow the same example.

But what those cunning individuals won't say to them is the feeling one gets afterward, the pain, guilt, scars of being shot, slashed or stabbed, the remorse of what one has or must do to be a part of their organization, the blood one must shed and spill on those so-called battle fields that at one time or another one must shed the blood of a loved one or in front of a family member's eyes (which is worse) and it is not because of the pressure, but rather because they will get to see how inhuman we have become within these walls.

Nor do they tell you of all the mental abuse one receives from bullies or wannabe hard-core individuals, the hours one must spend writing "not to your family members" but for the so-called essays, topics, lessons and disciplines, for that is the way to keep you hooked to their ways and beliefs. Making you think that you are learning something productive and for your own good, but rather this is done to keep you in line with their perspectives.

The money your family or friends have spend hours working, bleeding and sweating to send to you, will be split and distributed and totally will be under their control, even if you are to lead to believe it's not. They say no one (other brothers) will take advantage of you. However one must buy this or that for a homie. They are constantly on top of how much money is in your account and how much you must spend each month. In reality, the money is not totally yours to do or spend as you choose or want but as others need and most of those needs are not yours. If you refuse or express discontent of your funds distribution, you are not a home player "part of their circle" because you are not acting as "the so-called family" but as selfish and a no good individual and that my friends, most times means an obstacle to them and their beliefs because now you are occupying a space that belongs to one of their soldados (soldiers).

Hey brother! Have you ever wondered why prisoners called you fish when you first arrived within these walls? I assure you it's not because you are new to these waters "the prison" because when they throw their hook to the water, they fish you, and you find yourself biting right away. And as the saying goes, the fish dies by his mouth and most youngsters get into prison crime and gangs because of their mouth. They think they will impress someone or won't be picked on, not

Some may ridicule what I have written because they see themselves reflected in what I have said.

MAURICIO FUNES (CONT.)

continued from previous page

knowing or suspected they were the main prey because they are easier to mislead and manipulate with their airs of big brave men. They use their ego, machismo or simulated bravery against them. When later they find out that they were puppies amidst a pack of wolves "it's too late" or at least they think.

V.

So many young homies arrive with a couple of years to do for a parole validation, possession, petty theft, etc. and end up doing five to ten, up to a life in prison for a crime they were induced to commit behind these walls. Most of those brothers were the submissive ones, the ones that others mold, bend and shape to their satisfaction. They feel they have no choice, nowhere to run or hide, and none to trust or could understand their predicament. They allowed others to tell them what to do, like a water buffalo pulled by his nose ring or a horse by a mouthpiece. Never realized how far luck would go, or where it will lead them, nor of the grave consequences of the crime, if not crimes, they were induced to commit.

Many of the submissive keep saying to themselves "same as you now". Tomorrow I won't let his or that brother speak like that to me or tell me what to do. I'm done with them dudes that abuse their authority or want to take advantage of me. One more time and I'm out of here. I'm taking off, etc., etc. And that time and opportunity comes, and you are still there being pulled by your nose ring.

You see it, feel it, and still you are afraid to make a decision, if you are not afraid of being surrounded by the so-called enemies. When the doors open and you get into a fight, you are being pointed, even shot at with a Beretta or M-14, exposing and endangering your life. Then tell me my brother, what more is there to be afraid of? I'd rather fight for my own survival and not someone else's egoism, selfishness and self-destructive motives.

That tomorrow becomes a week, then a month, even years, and when you figure it out, it's almost a lifetime. A coward is not the one who leaves that life behind, rather the one that stays and allows others to bully him, abuse him and manipulate him. A coward is not the one that leaves and fights for his own agenda and survival. The one that stays and fight someone else's battles and ends, will never do as he pleases because that will be the end of his so-called vida loca (crazy life). And his own homies will take him out and in the long run, he will end up in the same spot that he was so proud of, now afraid of even. He learns to hate or be seen as a disgrace with scars that speak on their own "of his loyalty to said people."

VI.

Look brothers, you know what I'm talking about. It doesn't take a scientist to know this. Either you are blind to see beyond the picture that has been portrayed into you, or you are too stupid and await the end. I just made a picture for you. Take a stand — leave the gang life behind. There shouldn't be any one lifestyle, especially when you are trying to rehabilitate and do something with yourself.

And last but not least, there are those like myself who have realized or are tired of the lifestyle that gangs portray. That life is not always what it seems, as I'm sure many have already found out the hard way. Many have seen it but are not doing anything about it. They are too preoccupied with what his homies back home or other pintas (jailbirds) will think if he speaks his mind or shows some remorse. This lifestyle is not worth dying for my brother. You face death.

Every time a door opens and you continue with a

ridiculous indeterminate SHU, which is hard and is eating you, especially if you are a lifer, reach out. There are people that can help or help your self. Being in your cell 24-7 is not a joke, going over the same old schooling, that those so-called homies said is vital to your survival, of course if you are especially in that life style. It might make sense, even though it doesn't feel good, but this is only the basic knowledge to live within these walls. These are the ones that make life harder for you and everyone that comes in contact with and is against their purposes and goals, or don't see it their way.

You are being or have been misguided, misinformed and manipulated to feel as if your life and betterment depends on their knowledge of the prison life. If they make you see shadows everywhere, tell you that everyone is against you or out to get you "except them," then you feel obligated to go with the flow and to hell with the consequences.

The concept of respect is overrated at least by those individual's standards. If you think someone deserves to be stabbed or killed in the process just because he has raise his voice in anger or frustration, then you are a sick dude, and don't know the real meaning of homie or homeboy. But don't trip because sooner or later the same treatment will catch up with you and you will realize all the wrongdoing you did to others, and that it was not worth it.

VII.

I know for a fact by now some of the people I'm talking about probably have stopped reading this page (smiles) because their mind is too narrow as they themselves fill their mouths with sayings of other people. They want you to walk around with side blinders like themselves, like the horses on the city, pulling their big loads of misjudgments, wrongdoings and abuses.

Some may ridicule what I have written because they see themselves reflected in what I have said. They want desperately to be accepted or act like the truth in my words that they have read, have not hit a nerve or affected them to reach deep down inside their heart. Even though they want to escape from that chain that binds them, the hold that others have over them is too strong, stronger than their own will. So they prefer to stay chained to that miserable, cruel life. Instead of grabbing the key to free them selves, they throw it away every time they refuse to admit to their wrong lifestyle and change to a better one.

Emiliano Zapata famous words were, "I'd rather die standing on my feet than to live on my knees." This my brother is my question to you all. Is the fight, the struggle that you are doing. Are you doing it standing up or on your knees? Because if you're kissing someone's ass, and doing what they asked you to do, you are not doing the fight standing up. It would be impossible to kiss someone's butt standing upright. Of course if you are a little man [midget] then you are probably apparently doing it on toes. So stop kissing someone's butt and do your own thing.

Change your ways and your lifestyle. There is nothing to be afraid of. I'm saying this because I have been there, done that, and I'm not saying this because I'm angry where I'm at. I came freely and on my own two feet. But I'm saying this because I'm at peace with myself, and I want to open the door, your mind, to feel the same way I do. Not ashamed, but peaceful, and proud of what I did and the decision I took to break out of my old life style.

Peace brothers. I'm out.

ANGEL FELIX

Angel Felix sends us more real, powerful poetry from the confines of Tehachapi State Prison in Tehachapi, CA. Angel has been spitting game The Beat's way for a few years now, and we appreciate his dedication and commitment to bettering himself and our readers with his words.

every year's resolution

In the double 04, ain't much gonna change
I'm still livin' in the strange,
Surrounded by convicts of every trade
To keep my date remains my every year resolution
Educate my mind
Stay strong in my beliefs and keep movin'
Stay positive in everything I do
Try and learn from my mistakes
Remain pure and true
And make the best of any situation
My New Year's resolution
Is my advancement in the makings

To keep my date remains my every year resolution

Somebody Wake Me

Somebody wake me, I'm dreamin',
I started as an innocent seed growin' up on my own.
All my role models was "G's,"
There ain't no peace when comin' up in poverty
Watchin' the police beatin' on my family
It's like a dream I can't evade.
Trapped between concrete walls
A government slave, enemy of the state.
A rebel true to my beliefs:
Free the people, educate the youth on the streets
'Cause all I see is hard times and corruption
Government lies and government destruction
I ask God why I'm caught up in this world of sin
Gotta watch my friends and battle the demons within
And keep on point for those who oppose.
So many times I came close,

Trials And Tribulations

Every day I remain the same
and duck the haters on my path
Shake this monkey off my back.
Listen to these inmates glorify and brag
but the true and few move in silence
When it is time to roll,
ain't no stories to be told
And my dreams ain't for all to know
Secrets left in silence
Young thugs breed into violence
I ask the Lord for forgiveness
In my heart my intentions are righteous
Through the trials and tribulations
You either stay strong or you break down
Stay on your toes or you lay it down
It ain't no puzzle
This is the devil's playground

STEVEN RODRIGUEZ JR.

The talented Steven Rodriguez Jr. aka Sonrisa is back in The BWO this week to share his love for his beautiful daughter. It's not your typical lengthy commentary that he respectfully delivers our way, but in many ways it's much more priceless. Steven steps up with this heartfelt poem of love, which he writes from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA

The Beat Within

My paramount respects go out to all staff and writers. I thank you for your issues you've been sending me. I do hope my pieces that I've sent are acceptable.

I'm enclosing this poem I wrote for my four year old daughter. She's my heart and soul and she's now my sole motivating factor for me to strive and get myself out of prison. And be worthy to thrive in society.

Outside of that keep up the good work and remain dedicated.

Respectfully...

A Daughter's Poem

Daddy's lil princess
and everlasting precious lil girl,
You're priceless royalty and far more valuable than
all the world...
As you grow older I'll be there with you,
never again leaving you sad or blue...
A father's love is his greatest feat,
you my child I could never retreat,
back into the jungle streets
without that loving bliss,
in these separate
and distant days it's you I truly miss...
I love you so much I'll never let you go,
you're my love and happiness,
honor and paramount respect,
don't get it twisted you're daddy's greatest aspect...

**I love you so
much I'll never let
you go,
you're my love
and happiness**

AMANDA WHITE

The Beat wants to warmly welcome to our pages the talented Amanda White, who, thanks to a friend of The Beat, shares with us a bit about her self and gives us a healthy dose of poetry to chew on. Amanda White writes us from the Arizona State Prison Complex Perryville in Goodyear, Arizona.

Hi

Hi my name is Amanda White. I got the address from a very good friend of mine. She read me some of the poems and stories and they truly inspired me. I think what you do is wonderful. I hope that my story and poems touch someone like theirs touched me.

i'm sorry

I just want to say I'm sorry for all the things I said
For all the tears over me that you have shed
I just want to say I'm sorry for bringing up the past
And how I'd throw it in your face so very fast
I just want to say I'm sorry for never letting things go
And for being the cause our relationship would never grow
I just want to say I'm sorry for all the mistakes I've made
And how you were always the one who paid
I just want to say I'm sorry for all that I have done
Because in my heart, you are always number one.

Dedicated to my mother and father.

My Shell

Taking so much inside and holding it in.
This pain will never ever end.
Too careful not to let my feelings show.
So my burden will forever grow.
An endless need to reach out to someone.
Then finding out, there is no one.
No one I could tell all that I know.
For that is a part of me, I will never show.
So very young, yet so very old.
Others may think that I'm just cold.
If only they knew what it was like to be me.
Then maybe they would begin to see.
Instead I act like all is well.
And retreat once again inside my shell.

breaking the cycle

When I was growing up I seen a lot of heartache and destruction. My mother was in and out of prison behind her drug addiction. When I was eight years old I seen my mom in the newspaper with the headline, "Mom Arrested," with a picture of her in handcuffs and my little brothers behind her.

The smart thing would have been to do the opposite of her, but when I was growing up, everyone said I was going to be just like mom.

To me, my mom could do no wrong. But then I got older.

My father raised me the best that he knew how. But I was mad at the world. I started using drugs at 12 years old.

Recently I've learned to forgive my mother, because I'm 22 years old with one child of my own. And I'm sitting in prison for my second time.

My mother is now clean and taking care of my child, and all I want is to teach my son the right things to do in life. I want to break the cycle.

I want to thank my dad for never turning his back on me. No matter what I did or said to him, he was always there and still is. Thank you.

I dedicate this to my father, Glen White.

Many Times

Too many times I've been locked behind prison walls.
Inside, once again my pride begins to fall.
At night I dream of how it use to be.
During the day I remember how it felt to be free.
So much time wasted away.
But behind these walls I will stay.
The people I love out of my reach.
I wish I listened to what my father tried to teach.
Instead I used drugs.
Never giving up the friends who were thugs.
Too many times I've been locked behind prison walls.
Inside once again my pride begins to fall.

DEVIN

Devin, a former Beat participant in YGC, writes his thoughts about relationships. He is now out and enjoying the free world. He works part time as an intern in our office when he is not handling his business in the schoolhouse. We hope to hear more from him soon.

What Do It Take To Keep A Relationship

What's up wit' it? Right now I'm going to express my feelings of what it takes to be in a relationship — an honest one at that. To have and keep a relationship is honesty 'cause if you don't have that then the relationship you're in is going to be based on lying and arguing.

I know don't know no female or no male who likes to be lied to. Y'all think about that. What I'm trying to say is treat yo' mate as you would like to be treated.

treat yo' mate as
you would like
to be treated

PETE MENDOZA According to our next writer, Pete Mendoza, who writes us from the Santa Cruz County Jail, a number of years ago, when the Beat was in it's infancy in Santa Cruz Juvenile he was one of the first writers out of that hall. Well today Pete is reaching out from Santa Cruz County jail with some of the most thoughtful poetry in this issue and we are honored to share his touching work with you readers. We are so glad Pete hasn't forgotten about us and today is making a serious statement to us all that he is very interested in saving a life from falling into the same traps he finds himself in today, as he also reaches for some support through our pages of the Beat. Read on!

Hello

My name is Pete Mendoza, and I remember when I first wrote in The Beat in Santa Cruz Juvenile in the late 90's. Back then we thought it was a joke, but today I'm glad to see that it's getting so big these past years since I've been gone, and now I'm in Santa Cruz County Jail fighting a new case. I'm on lockdown for my history of violence and can't be in general population.

I got your address from a friend and I would like to be in The Beat again. I need some support too and I think I could find it in The Beat.

I have no money to write letters, but I'll do what I could to send more poems and share my opinion for people.

I've grown a lot since I first started writing, so if I'm given a chance I could maybe help someone whose going through what I'm going through, sorry about my writing and spelling it's cause of my lack of schooling. All because I wanted to be cool, but now I regret every minute of it.

Have You Ever Felt Like Me

have you ever felt so lonely,
not one friend at all,
there's no one you could talk to,
no one you could call,
you haven't got a letter or a visit in a while,
have you ever hurt so bad it's hard for you to smile,
you act like things are easy and try to stand the pain,
there are nights you fight back tears from falling
down like rain,
have you ever felt so lonely there's so much pain
inside
but there's no where to run to?
not a place to hide,
your hunting for an answer every day
and night
your world is so dark and you're
searching for a light
but have you ever felt so lonely
not one friend at all

**Mother, please
forgive me.
I know I don't
deserve you
but I need you.**

forgive me

If only I knew what I wanted to do
before I dedicated my love to this street gang,
which has only caused me pain

I never would have been sad and lonely.

My love would have belonged only to my mother
who caressed and held me when I was younger.

Now I'm stuck in County Jail with no one to hold me.

Now that I'm all alone people act like they don't know me.

They're starting to be some shady ass homies,
nobody has wrote me now,

the people who loved me only scolded me.

Love of my life where are you when I need you,
locked in this cell 23 hours a day

driving me insane.

I'm sad and lonely

I need your love to hold me

if only you knew the pain I'm going through
without you.

I'm like a rose with no scent

like the angel without wings.

Mother, please forgive me.

I know I don't deserve you but I need you.

**I need some support
too and I think I could
find it in The Beat.**

just Listen

Joy is an illusion only suffering is real.

With every step you touch the ground of reality,
growing wisely with your own mentality.

Learn how to enjoy the precious jewels you already have,
you have eyes that can see,

lungs that can breath,

legs that can walk, and lips that can smile.

We already have some happiness but we are not exactly aware of it.

We are free but don't know it.

When we were young we're strong and healthy but we don't appreciate it.

Even when someone tries to tell us we still don't realize what we have.

The greatest miracle is to be alive.

If you want to make it you have to struggle.

Struggle is not an idea it's a practice.

We can put an end to our suffering,

just by realizing that our suffering is not worth suffering for.

How many people kill themselves because of rage and despair?

Don't run away from things that are unpleasant.

You have to fight in order to embrace things that are pleasant.

Face difficulties and face happiness.

Well that's all for now.

Thanks for listening.

If you're reading this, I just want to help
so you don't go through what this 21 year old has been through.

FRANK ANTHONY RAMOS

Sometimes, we think The Beat is the best magazine around for discovering new, fantastic talent. Such is the case with a brand new Beat writer, Frank Anthony Ramos — "The Kid." With less than a year left to do, this 26-year-old Puerto Rican currently resides in a California prison he describes as "this great resort named Donovan State Prison in San Diego." These three poems are the first three he's ever written. The first is a sad love letter which still manages to be full of hope; the second is a message from self to self; and the third is directed squarely at the young men and women who write each week from their juvenile hall units, and then go back to their 'hoods and barrios to consider their next steps. "The Kid" definitely has major skills with words, and even more major skills with thinking. We welcome this new voice to our great family of writers.

MY ENIMIGO (ENEMY)

It's a trip! Who would've known
that my greatest friend is also my biggest foe?
Let me take a second to make sense of the question.
How can he be my curse, but also a blessin'?

Agony and ecstasy go hand in hand,
like me and my enemy.
My nemesis since genesis, we have quite a long history...
I've had many discussions...to show him that the
repercussions...
would be counter-productive...if he was to cause my
destruction! And of course he agrees...
and just when I start to believe
that maybe we can live together in peace,
here he comes again with some kind of stupidity...
it's just insanity, the way he broke up my family,
and he is constantly putting shackles on my feet!
Wouldn't you think, after so much disrespect,
with all that bullshh,
wouldn't you expect, that I would just rid myself of this
nuisance? Only if it was as easy as that;
his homicide would be my demise
and that's not opinion, it's a fact!...

The pain has been plenty, tragedies many.
He steals so much yet comes away empty handed.
Damn it! I just don't understand it.
Why does it seem his hate is so great?
His habits and schemes, these things, why can't I escape?
But let me state the fact of the matter.
The blame is all his,
but that just makes it all the much sadder!...
'Cause you see, in all reality...
I myself am my own greatest...
My own worst...ENEMY!

Never Forever

In the beginning we agreed it would be forever!
Now you got it in your mind, "Us together? No, never!"
But that's only 'cause the devil's trickery is so sly,
ever so cleaver.

But I know you realize, our love is strong, will never die,
and our connection can never be severed!
But I see before there can be an "us" there must be change
in me. Must build trust,
stop doing drugs, and cease the suffering!
Grow up, be honest, but most importantly take care of my
responsibilities!

And while I'm workin' hard on that,
I hope you can try and accept my apology.
I never meant to hurt you,
and I never meant to make you cry.
I hope you can believe that,
and not think it's just another lie.

The blame is mine! Prisoner of my own device! My demise;
caused by my weakness and Satan —
drugs as his disguise!

But we must look forward and not dwell in the past.
Learn from it, not forget it, but accept it, then choose the
right path. Life is so short, and it goes by so fast.
Here one minute, then boom! Gone in a flash!
So I'll just dry my eyes, and look up to the sky! Pray,
and this is what I'll say:

"Lord, please, make me strong, make me better!
Give me wisdom, guidance, and courage, to deal with my
endeavor!" Because I'm not deceived, clearly I see, that in
order for us to be together,
I first must let you go!...
And this I'll do now...but never...forever!

Armed

Here's a lil' something for the readers of the "Beat Within!"
I begin, by hopin' that you'll not only hear but listen,
because what I have to say is serious business!
So please pay attention, for enlightenment is what I'm spittin'...
even thou I am in prison, I'm a criminal,
I'm just an individual who suffers from the disease of addiction!
But don't get it twisted, I'm not a victim.
I am just a product of my decisions!
But that's another story to be told. Another time.
I'm not here to talk about me,
I'm here to try and shed some light!...
Sometimes you have to read in between the lines,
for things aren't always what they seem...
Must try and separate truth from lies,
and always stand up for what you believe!...
You could never go wrong by doing what's right
and try to always stand on your own two feet!...
Be careful how you spend your time,
our next breath is not guaranteed!...and if you ask me,
the most important thing in life is undeniably our family!...
We all know life is not easy, full of unanswered questions.
But you have to be grateful for what you have,
and always count your blessin's!...
Try to learn from your mistakes, because life is full of lessons...
and our own beds we make, so be careful of what you step in...
I once heard,
"Be careful of your thought for they turn into words.
Mind your words for they turn into actions.
Mind your actions, for they turn into to habits."
And the habits that we create are the habits that are hard to break!
Many people have it wrong!
Like Scarface says, "Don't believe that song."
It's true; gangsters really don't live that long!...
You might think it's cool to gangbang, push, peddle, and slang,
walking around packin' pistols!...
I'm here to tell you it's not a game, you'll just end up in a grave,
there's no future in usin' or sellin' cocaine or crystal!...
You want to make a name, claim some fame?
You need to sit back and look at the bigger picture!...
There's absolutely nothin' to gain, but death, prison, or pain.
It's not a joke, it's a serious issue!...
It would be wise for you to heed my advice,
but we must all live and learn.
It's your life, you'll do as you like, but just remember,
if you play with fire you will get burned!...
Life is like a chess game; you have to think before you move!
And there's nobody else to blame, because it's up to you
weather you win or lose!...
The machine has created a smoke screen.
There's a conspiracy to keep you and me from seeing reality!
They're tryin' to keep us blind.
They're trying to pull the wool over our eyes.
So we don't recognize the truth
and realize that what they're feeding is just a bunch of lies!
But the kid is here to set the record straight.
What was once a free nation is turning into a police state!
But it's not too late.
We have to come together for unity is the only way!
So let's break the chains!
Put our glocks away, flush the drugs down the drain!
Start to love one another and get rid of all the hate!
And then tomorrow maybe this world can be a better place!...
You don't have to take my word for it, just look around!
It's plain as day to see they're trying to keep the masses down!
It's time we face some facts.
Seek knowledge
and always do the right thing so you don't fall into the trap!
Last but not least, I beg you to please,
please lets stop disrespecting our queens!
This is The Kid signin' off respectfully and remember:
we are stronger than we think! I'm outie, catch you later, Peace!

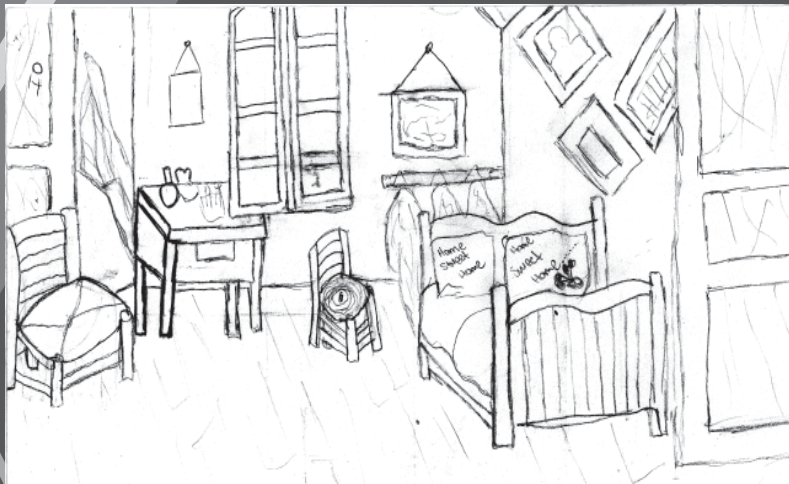
FRANK RIVERA

We are honored to have the thoughtful writings of Frank Rivera Diné/Taino who shares his teachings, insights and wisdom from the SHU in Corcoran State Prison. Not only does Frank share his own writings in this issue he gives us a taste of some "indigenous ideology." We definitely look forward to his bio, Frank we hope will write us rather sooner than later. We are sure he has plenty to say to us readers.

End of the Trail

Once there was an Indian who became a Christian.
He became a very good Christian;
he went to church, and he didn't smoke or drink, and he was
good to everyone.
He was a good man. Then he died.
First he went to the Indian hereafter,
but they wouldn't take him because he was a Christian,
then he went to Heaven, but they wouldn't let him in
because he was an Indian.
Then he went to Hell, but they wouldn't admit him there either
because he was so good.
So he came alive again and he went to the Buffalo Dance and
the other dances
and taught his children to do the same thing.

-Anonymous (Fox)



AN excerpt

Greetings, thanks for The Beat you sent me when I was back in CMC East. I am no longer there, I am now at Corcoran SHU. I got the letter, it gave me a lot of enthusiasm and responsibility.

I have some pieces I want to contribute. I hope to see them in The Beat. I want to still share my thoughts on "indigenous ideology."

They just turned off the lights, I now have to use my squirrel eyes.

One of the pieces is from a highly respected Lakota elder, War Eagle, that is in the Ironhouse, it is of great importance as you will see he is the Clan Fathers of the people of the Red Tail the Earthbridge Family Circle.

I still wanted an article of the Aztec God "Teotl" Quezalcoatl and if you have anything of indigenous people it was in The BWO in 2001.

There are a lot of strong minded individuals we just need to keep our head straight and our minds focus.

I too want to write a bio on how I came to be. It is real deep but I need to focus, pray, and be in a good frame of mind. I have to watch what I say so please give me time and comfort.

I am Aztlan

I do not hate, nor envy anyone
I do respect and care for others
The very same way I expect it.
To be respected and cared for,
I do not breed any kind of revenge
Nor do I gather up to plan evil.
Or to seek negative ways,
I love my people, land,
Culture as I love my neighbor indeed
I do not have unkind intention or
Thoughts to destroy or hurt others,
Their people, land, and culture
I know how to share, Mother Earth
With others, each to its own
I say to all we cannot change
The mistakes of our ancient past,
But we can change our present
and near future.
I enjoy life to the very fullest
Admire the beauty and wonder of
The many blessings of Great Spirit
To take advantage of every positive
Thing I do with pride, because...
I was born a Native of this land
I will die a Native of Aztlan...
All Natives or brothers and sisters
With a strong faith for a better day
I await for justice to touch everyone
I am past, present, and future
Those who know me are happy to know
And seek to know who I am...
I am Aztlan
I will teach you my ancient beliefs,
As you teach me yours together
We can learn to be as one
I live in your hearts, minds, and spirit,
That's who I am,
I am Aztlan.

-Cuauhtemoc

**There are a lot
of strong minded
individuals we just
need to keep our
head straight and
our minds focus.**

Where Have Respect, Honor, and Compassion Gone?

In today's society the qualities of respect, honor, and compassion have been disappearing like the morning mists. Most people may not even notice the change. The young follow the peer pressures upon them to be like others.

This virus in society affects all cultures and races of people, but some races more than others, but still affecting everyone. Those of us who care ask... Why? In each individuals mind there will be many answers and justifications or rationalizations as to why. Simply from my opinion (and opinions are like habitats: we all have them) I see a breakdown in family values and spiritual endeavors and instead we are like sheep following what has been accepted as 'normal' behavior because everyone else is doing it.

I remember as a youth having elders and holy men teach me a way of life that was about having respect for all living things. Especially respect for my elders, my family and my people. When fighting in two wars, though I took lives, I never failed when a quiet moment could be found, to send prayers in the smoke in ceremony for the Spirit World believed in by them.

Respect, honor, and compassion cost nothing in monetary sums, but they enrich the heart, mind, and spirit. Nowadays, the young seem to think the status symbol is to be a gangster. Where do they get it from? Parents? Movies? News media? Video games? The news media brainwashes the public on nothing but violence.

We were all given choices in whatever religion we were brought up in, but now that the world is in turmoil and danger, there are many seeking a connection with a spiritual power to enhance their lives and the lives of others. This has brought a dangerous trend that has reared its ugly head. Many in this society are not content with their own heritage and way of life. They take on false identities or force their ways on others, thereby disrespecting those who are content with who and what they are. Many are like grasshoppers who when they are tired of one, they move on to another false and endless road to finding peace within themselves. They never stay long nor want to put in the work that is needed, but want a quick fix for their discontent. I would be remiss if I did not say that anyone who has a good heart and is sincere should have the opportunity to study seriously another way of life it enhances their life.

Again, I say, do it with respect and also realize that in another's culture, there are things that cannot be shared by outsiders who were born to it. If all the citizens of the world would accept a Spiritual Power in their lives then respect, honor, and compassion would reign again.

People of the Red Tail Clanfather War Eagle (Lakota).

**If all the citizens of the world
would accept a Spiritual
Power in their lives then
respect, honor, and compassion
would reign again.**

FRANK RIVERA (CONT.)

Follow Your Heart

Follow your heart it will guide you on the path of the Good
Red Road

so you will not walk in a crooked path.

Follow your heart it is your medicine bag it will heal you
and others

Follow your heart it is your rocks (ancestors) that are
heated like sun and stars

Follow your heart it is your drum beat of the NDN's (Native
Dine "People" Nation) and sing to that which you love and
All Our Relatives.

Follow your heart it is your life which is your Sun Dance.
Follow your heart it is your fire to enlighten you

"the living pipe"

to pray to the Great Spirit.

Follow your heart it is your feather you wear in our heart to
pray with to the Creator.

Follow your heart it will purify you with your tears
and sweat.

Follow your heart it is your circle of council of ancestors
the blood pumping rotating for life to the next 7th
generation that will help you make good decisions.

Follow your heart it will release the fear you will endure
that will give you strength like a buffalo.

Follow your heart it is the truth, facts, and proof of what the
mind is telling us.

Follow your heart with prayers and songs for rain that there
be a good harvest.

Follow your heart and spirit they are both holding the mind
in place for the mind it would,
as it does, only lead us astray.

Follow your heart for all ceremonies, traditions, and stories
to live in peace, harmony, understanding, and balance.

Follow your heart to study educate from the wisdom and
knowledge of all.

Follow your heart and give back offerings which you have
taken or received.

Follow your heart for the people, family, elders, mother,
father, sister, brother, children, and wife or girlfriend (soul
mate).

Follow your heart for the one leg (disabled), 2 legged, 3
legged (elders with cane), 4 legged, winged, finned, creepy
crawling, stand tall, the seen and unseen

Follow your heart in the Art of War and be humble as doves
and wise as serpents this is a true good warrior

Follow your heart for the winds of the four cardinal
directions E, S, W, N above, below, and in between all these
seven directions you send smoke in prayer

Follow your heart and respect and love Mother Earth, Father
Sun, Grandmother Moon, Seven Sisters (Big Dipper), and
other star people, but most of all Tunkashila Grandfather

Follow your heart and you will walk in beauty like a
hurricane in the spirit of crazy horse and Tecumseh for All
Our Relations

Follow your heart seasons may change
but your heart will not

Follow your heart in a good way and sacred manner
you will not jeopardize you or your love ones

Follow your heart for there may be sorrow in Your Heart
because of the Trail of Tears, End of Trail, Broken Trail
of Treaties, The Long Walk, but there is a happy hunting
grounds where Ghost Dance in the Indian World
with Buffalo

Follow your heart respect and honor all hunted fair game
this is a way of life

Follow your heart The Beat Within.



End Of The Trail